

An Insider's Guide to Islam

By Yushau Sodiq

Dedicated to my Mentor

Professor Isma'il al-Faruqi

And to my parents

**Alhaji Sadiku Onakoya and Mrs.
Sinatu Sadiku**

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Preface

An Insider's Guide To Islam

By Yushau Sodiq

Islam is the religion of total submission to God. It is the belief of more than one-fifth of all human beings and is the second largest religion in the world. Despite its large number of followers, little was known about Islam in America until after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Unfortunately, the media portrayed Islam after September 11th negatively and distorted its true meaning. Hence, some people did not want to hear anything about Islam, while many others began to ask questions about it. The media has portrayed the Islamic religion as a threat to the security of the U.S. However, many Americans want to understand what Islam really stands for and who Muslims are. After seeing and hearing so many negative depictions, they want to know the true nature of Islam. Many Americans wonder how Islam can be considered Abrahamic. Does Islam share the same values with Jude-Christian traditions? People want to know how Islam came to America, how it developed in the U.S. and what exactly it offers its adherents. Further, why are Americans, especially African Americans and Latino/na are embracing it as their religion despite all the assaults on it by the media?

This book, *An Insider's Guide to Islam*, attempts to answer the above questions. As someone who has taught Islam in the classroom for many years, I believe my analysis and contributions will shed brighter light on the diverse issues on Islam which the audience will find both interesting and informative. This work is primarily written for college-level students, the general public and anyone who is interested in learning more about Islam and Muslims. Of course, there are many books on the market about Islam. Most address mainly historical and political aspects of Islam and pay less attention to the fullness of its inner dimensions. What I analyze in this work has not been covered in many

other books in the depth with which I cover and discuss the topics. A few scholars have covered the same subjects; however, they tend to utilize a more political and social analysis. One rarely finds any detailed analysis, for instance, of the roles of the four caliphs who spread Islam after Muhammad in modern introductory books on Islam, despite the fact that without the critical efforts of the immediate companions of Prophet Muhammad, Islam would not have spread to all corners of the world in the 7th and 8th centuries. The *Qur'an*, the Islamic scripture, would not be in the hands of Muslims today. Much has been written about the Umayyad and Abbasid empires. But discussions of these empires are incomplete without reference to the companions and the four righteous caliphs. Without them, the Umayyad and the Abbasid empires would have had nothing to inherit from the past and nothing to build upon. Therefore, a whole chapter in this work elaborates the roles of the four caliphs in the spread of Islam.

This book has thirteen chapters. In each chapter I discuss one particular topic and its relationship to Islam. The followings are the topics that I cover:

1. Islam and Its Meanings
2. Islam and Muhammad
3. Islam and the Caliphs
4. Islam and Its Beliefs
5. Islam and Its Sources: the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (*Hadith*)
6. Islam and the Law (*Shari'ah*)
7. Islam and Spiritual Life
8. Islam and Women
9. Islam and Social Life
10. Islam and Morals
11. Islam and Other Religions
12. Islam in America
13. Islam and *Jihad*

Conclusion

Each chapter begins with a short introduction followed by a detailed discussion of the subject matter and concludes with a summary. This is followed by suggested further readings for those who want to expand their knowledge of the subject discussed. I complete the book with a summary of all the chapters.

With this analysis, I believe that students and the general public will have a better understanding and appreciation of Islam, Muslims and what they actually believe and practice in their daily lives. The ideas expressed in this work are mine unless otherwise cited. I thank God for enabling me to accomplish this book after many years of research.

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CHAPTER I

Islam: Its Meanings and Advent

Introduction

The religion of Islam focuses on the total submission to Almighty God and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, the messenger of God, as believed by Muslims. God is known in the Arabic language as *Allah*. The root word of Islam derives from *S-L-M* (pronounced *silim*), which connotes making peace with oneself, with other creatures, and with *Allah*, the Creator. It also connotes the process of giving something to someone. Submission to God implies following what God wants, whether or not one is convinced of the logic or the rationale of the required act. If a Muslim were to obey only those injunctions of which he was convinced, he would not be considered a submitter, but one who follows his rationality and desires. And if everyone were to follow his or her whims, there would be no Islam. This does not imply that Islamic injunctions are irrational or illogical. Rather, the above explanation suggests that Islam expects a Muslim to do what God wants, even when one is not totally convinced of the wisdom behind what is required. Nevertheless, a person has an absolute freedom to embrace Islam or not to embrace it. *Allah* states clearly in the *Qur'an* 2:256 that there is no compulsion in religion. Thus, Islam means a complete voluntary submission to the will of *Allah*, who is assumed to know what is best for His creatures.

There are many definitions of Islam suggested by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. They express what Muslims believe and practice. Some are social definitions; others are political or doctrinal explanations.

Here are a few of them: Islam is "the system of beliefs and rituals based on the *Kuran*."¹ This definition suggests that Islam consists of rituals and systems of belief drawn from the Muslim religious text *al-Qur'an*. Also, this definition is an exclusive one because it leaves out other essential aspects of Islam, such as ethics and politics. Islam is more than a system of beliefs and rituals. It stipulates what a Muslim should or should not do in his/her daily life. Islam is not only based on the teachings of the *Qur'an* (the Muslim scripture), but also on the exemplary practices of the Prophet Muhammad, which are known as *Sunnah* or *Hadith* (the sayings, the deeds and the approval of Prophet Muhammad).

Frederick Denny, an Islamist, defines Islam as "a complete way of life embracing beliefs and devotional practices within a larger context of regulated social relations, economic responsibilities and privileges, political ideals, and community loyalties."² This definition echoes Hasan al-Banna's idea of Islam.³ To al-Banna, "Islam is a religion and a state (*Din wa Dawlah*). It is all embracing, which regulates every aspect of life, adjudicating on everyone its concerns and prescribing for it a solid and rigorous order."⁴

Al-Banna and Denny do not reduce Islam to mere rituals and faith. Islam to them instructs believers on how to live their daily lives according to the guidance of the *Qur'an*. On that basis, al-Banna, in particular, argues very strongly that there is no separation between Church and State in Islam. Politics, economic developments, and social, educational and technological advancements are all parts of Islam. Therefore, to al-Banna, Islam as a religion is necessarily intricately interwoven with politics. He argues that Islam is a total way of life. This holistic idea of Islam, says Larry Poston, also an Islamist, transforms religion from

being a mere appendage of particular ethnic backgrounds to an aspect of daily life requiring personal commitment and action.⁵

While scholars hold different opinions on what Islam is, the Prophet Muhammad, who founded Islam, defines it as "the observance of the five pillars:"

- a) A belief in one God (*Allah*) and that Muhammad is *Allah's* messenger (*Tawheed*);
- b) Praying five times daily (*Salat*);
- c) Giving support to the poor and the needy (*Zakat*);
- d) Fasting for 29 or 30 days in the month of *Ramadan* every year (*Saum*); and
- e) Performing pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca (in Saudi-Arabia) for those who can afford it, once in one's life.⁶

Muslims who observe these five principles, according to Muhammad, will be considered true Muslims. Of course, these are the minimum requirements of Islam. There are other obligations and duties that a Muslim should perform, as stated in *Qur'an* 2:177. Muhammad's definition succinctly expresses what a Muslim should practice, believe, and do for himself/herself and other members of the Muslim community. Muslims claim that Muhammad was one of the prophets who defined what his religion is without ambiguity, living it and applying its principles in his own life before he died. A year before his death in 632 C. E, he received a revelation declaring that the basic features of the Islamic religion had been completed and that *Allah* is pleased with the religion of Islam for human beings (*Qur'an* 5: 3). The above is a functional definition of Islam from Muhammad.

It was reported that a person came to Muhammad and asked him about Islam. Muhammad told this person that Islam is based on five pillars. The man responded by asking whether he would go to paradise if he followed those five pillars. The Prophet answered in

1 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, 3rd edition, (N.Y: E. J. Brill, 1991), sv, Islam.

2 Frederick M. Denny, *Islam and the Muslim Community* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), p. 6.

3 Hasan al-Banna was the founder of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. He was born in Egypt in 1906, founded the Muslim Brothers (a religious reformist group) in 1928, and died in 1949.

4 Charles Wendell, trans., *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna* (California: University of California Press, 1978), p. 48.

5 Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activities and the Dynamics of Conversion* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 129.

6 That Islam is based on five pillars is reported in *Hadith*, the deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad. See Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari: Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Salafiyyah, 1986), vol. 1. p. 64. The English version of this *Hadith* is in translation by Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denny Johnson-Davies, *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith* (Damascus: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1977), p. 35. See Chapter Four for a discussion of the Five Pillars.

the affirmative. The person said that he would not add anything to or decrease anything from them either. Upon hearing this, Muhammad assured his disciples that the man would enter paradise if he sincerely adhered to what he had just pledged. Islam unconditionally requires its adherents to subscribe to these principles. And regardless of whether a Muslim belongs to one sect of Islam or another, he must observe these basic requirements. If he denies any one of them, he will not be considered a Muslim. Therefore, both the Sunnis and the Shiites adhere to these five pillars because they are the foundation of Islam.

Who Is A Muslim?

A Muslim is one who practices Islam: One who declares that there is no god but *Allah* and that Muhammad is His messenger. Expressing this statement is known in Islam as "the declaration of faith (*shahadah*)," i.e., making a witness. The implication of making this declaration is that after this statement, a person "engages in the pursuit of righteousness for the rest of his life.... He interferes with every natural process so as to make it serve human needs and fulfill human joys."⁷ In a broader sense, a Muslim is a monotheist. Hence, both Christians and Jews are seen as Muslims; they are "People of the Book" who share in the divine revelation from one God. They all recognize Abraham as the father of monotheistic belief. According to the Prophet Muhammad, every human being is a Muslim by birth, because he/she is born in a state of submission to God, the Creator. Islam is the natural order for him or her. However, his/her choosing of Christianity or Judaism or other beliefs is a matter of socialization or adaptation by his/her parents.⁸

Some people consider Islam as the religion of the black man as preached by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and Minister Louis Farrakhan in the Nation of Islam in America. Needless to say, there are more white Muslims than black Muslims. People of many nations and races in the world embrace Islam. Some also think that since Islam was

introduced by an Arab prophet and spread first in Arab countries, hence the Arabs must form the majority of the world's Muslim population. The opposite is the truth. Arab Muslims constitute only eighteen percent of the whole Muslim population. Also, there are many Christian Arabs who are not Muslims. Some of them bear Muslim names like Musa, Maryam, Ahmad, Shaheed, etc. There are many Christian Arabs in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq and a few living in Kuwait, Bahrain, and in Saudi Arabia. There are churches in all these places, including Dhahran in Saudi Arabia.⁹

Although Islam means a total submission and resignation to *Allah*, what it actually represents to each Muslim differs from one person to another and from one country to another. In Arab countries, Islam at times equals Arab nationalism; to North African people, it is a cultural identity. To African American Muslims in the U.S., Islam provides a new social identity that affirms the personality of the African American person, and asserts the Islamic origin of the slaves, who were brought from Africa and from whom they descended. In this sense, Islam has been used as a means of liberation from Christian domination and the relegation of African Americans from "nobody" to "somebody." Many African American Muslims claim that Islam fills a religious void that exists in Christianity. They believe they have been subjugated in the name of Christianity to the status of second-class citizens. With all its many shades of meaning, the word Muslim thus refers to "this human being who, through the use of his intelligence and free will, accepts a divinely revealed law [*Qur'an*]."¹⁰ A Muslim is one who submits to *Allah* and conducts his life according to the teachings of Islam as revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the *Qur'an*.

Indeed, Muslims believe that all prophets who are mentioned in the *Qur'an*, i.e., those who came before Muhammad such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jacob, Job, Jesus, etc., were Muslims. My students repeatedly ask me why Muslims do not follow Jesus and accept him as "the Lord" if they believe that he was a Muslim and a great prophet, whom *Allah* described as a holy spirit (*ruh al-*

7 Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi, *Islam* (Maryland: International Graphics, 1984), p. 5.

8 The Prophet said in an authentic hadith that: "Every child is born (a Muslim) following his or her inclination (*fitrah*). It is the parents who make him or her a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian." See Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in *Fath al-Bari, Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Egypt, Cairo: Maktabat Kuliyat al-Azhar, 1987), p. 127.

9 Some Westerners think that Muslim governments in the Arab world never allow Christians to live among them. In reality, there are many Christians in the Arab world - actually in every country in the Arab world.

10 Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 27.

qudus) in the *Qur'an*. My response is that Muslims recognize the prophets as messengers of God; they brought guidance to humanity. Some of them came with revealed books, and some did not. They invited their peoples and nations to believe in one God, enjoined on them doing good deeds and discouraged them from evil acts. They themselves submitted their will to God and informed their followers that whoever believed in them actually believed in God who sent them. Jesus is quoted to have said in the Gospel of John 12:44 that, "*When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.*" In a sense, Jesus was one of the greatest prophets who surrendered to God and delivered his message until he was raised up to heaven by God, the Father. To Muslims Jesus was not God but a servant of God. He always asserted that he was sent by his father in heaven. Later, the Prophet Muhammad came to complete Jesus's message as Jesus came to complete Moses's message in a different way. Muslims do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, and do not think of Muhammad as a divine figure. He is believed to be "*the Seal*" of the prophets.¹¹ In Islam, no prophet can be thought of as a divine being, because only *Allah* is divine. Thus, in Islam, Jesus cannot be considered a divine figure. Jesus is a great prophet, but not "the God," "the Lord," or "the son of God." Muslims follow Jesus as long as what he said does not contradict the injunctions of the *Qur'an*.

However, one should not be misled into believing that the prophets who came before Muhammad practiced the type of Islam that Muslims practice today. Those prophets did not receive the *Qur'an*; neither did

- 11 This claim of Muslims that Muhammad is the last prophet of God has caused many tensions in the Muslim world, particularly in Iran, when an Iranian clergyman, Ali Muhammad, declared himself the awaited Messiah in Iran in 1844. He was persecuted in 1850 for being a false prophet. After his death, one of his followers, Sayyid Hussein Ali, later known as Bahaullah, declared himself the Prophet in 1863 at Ridvan in Iraq and was sent into exile until he died in Akka in 1892. However, Muslims do not believe that there will be a real prophet after Muhammad. The Baha'is believe that there will be many prophets to come, for God sends messengers and revelations as needed. This concept in Baha'i tradition is expressed as "Progressive Revelation." For more information on this, see Baha'i literature such as: Joseph Shepherd, *The Elements of the Baha'i Faith* (M.A: Element, Inc., 1992); Robert H. Stockman and Jonah Winters, *A Resource Guide for the Scholarly Study of the Baha'i Faith* (Wilmette, IL: Research Office, Baha'i National Center, 1997), 7th ed.

they pray five times daily like the followers of Muhammad do today. All those prophets are considered Muslims because, from the Islamic perspective, they all submitted to God, did the will of God on earth, and called their people to worship God. In other words, the core or the *WHY* of these Abrahamic religions is the same, but the *HOW* of each religion is different. That is, the reason why people worship God and relate to Him is the same, but how each group worships God is different. The beliefs of these traditions are very similar but the practices sharply differ from one another due to the environment in which they grew and the cultures in which each religion developed.

Arabs Before Islam

The area where Islam was born and developed is known as *Hijaz*. It is known today as Saudi Arabia. Muslims consider Saudi Arabia the cradle of Islam. Bedouin Arabs inhabited this region, which was a barren desert that produced no food or good fruits, except dates. It never enjoyed a great civilization and was not governed by any centralized government before the advent of Islam. *Hijaz* was surrounded by Yemen, which had witnessed a great civilization before Islam. The Bedouin of *Hijaz* were free Arabs, nomadic people, who constantly moved from one place to another. Since they lived in the desert, the *no-man's land*, they enjoyed unlimited freedom and did whatever they wanted. They were accountable to no government except to their tribes' leaders. Each tribe was governed by its customs and led by its chief (*shaykh*) with no respect given to other tribes unless they were allies. They constantly battled against one another, raided foreigners and neighbors, enslaved their women, and occasionally fought to death for trivial things. Because of these unhealthy social attitudes and the destructive behavior of those nomads in Arabia, Muslims label that period "an era of ignorance" (the *Jahiliyyah*) meaning those people did not know what was good for their society. And even on those occasions when they did know, they indifferently failed to keep themselves from evil actions like raiding and fighting. These nomads had a saying that one should support his brother regardless of whether he was wrong or right, or whether he was an oppressed or an oppressor. To them, the land belonged to the strong and whomever was powerful. However, it

should not be construed from this that the Arabs in those days earned their daily livelihood simply by raiding. Some of them were traders and professionals.

Furthermore, Muslims label the period before Islam as the "era of ignorance" (*jahiliyyah*) in that people were not governed by any revealed religion. They neither believed in resurrection nor in Judgment Day. Therefore, "the age of ignorance" is any age wherein the law of God is not practiced. Islam was able to retain some of the good cultural Arabian values, such as bravery, hospitality, truthfulness and loyalty to one's beliefs and nation. In addition, the Arabs of the *Hijaz* were polytheistic in their belief (*Mushrikun*). They believed in one Supreme god plus many lesser gods who they perceived as intermediaries between them and the Supreme God. To them, this life is all there is. They worshipped metal idols, stone statues, totems, and communed with other trivial objects, wrapping them with a halo of sanctity. Nevertheless, some of them actually believed in an omnipotent God, but perceived him to be high and remote. Thus, each tribe set up lesser gods like *Lat* and *Uzzah* (the goddesses of Mecca) as intermediaries to the Supreme God. "Wherever they traveled, they carried their gods with them. When they were hungry, they ate them like dates if the gods were edible objects. It is likely that they considered the worship of these idols and totems as a means of rapprochement with God."¹²

That was the religious situation in Arabia before Islam came on the scene. Mecca, the city where Muhammad was born, was a center of trade, a place of transit for travelers, and a city where many Arabs visited on pilgrimage. Therein was a cubic house known as *Ka'aba* (the house of God). Muslims believe that the Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael built it for the worship of the one true God. As time went on, the *Ka'aba* became a house of idols that attracted many Arab pilgrims, who also considered it a house of worship. The people of Mecca became its custodians with the Quraysh tribe in charge. It was at Mecca that Muslims believe that the light of Islam emerged to illuminate the whole world with a new religion of monotheism, the belief in One God, *Allah*.

12 Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, translated by Isma'il Ragi al-Faruqi (Indiana, Plainfield: American Trust Publications, 1976), pp. 19-20.

The Birth of Muhammad

Muhammad was born in Mecca to Abdullah bin Abd al-Muttalib. Legend has it that Abd al-Muttalib had no children at the time. He prayed to his deity at the *Ka'aba* in Mecca that if he were blessed with ten sons, he would sacrifice any one of them to his deity. His prayer was answered. Subsequently, he had ten sons and Abdullah was designated to be the sacrificial son. Although Abd al-Muttalib decided to fulfill his promise, his tribe, the Quraysh, objected and advised that camels could be sacrificed instead. On the Quraysh's request, Abd al-Muttalib sought the advice of a female seer at *Yathrib* (later known as Medina) so as not to incur the wrath of the deity.

"What, in your custom, is the amount of a man's blood worth?" she asked him. "Ten camels," he answered. She said, "Return then to your country and draw near your god two arrows, one with the name of Abdullah and the other with the term ten camels. If the arrow drawn is that of the youth, then multiply the number of camels and draw again until your god is satisfied."¹³ Abd al-Muttalib heeded this advice and ransomed Abdullah with one hundred camels. He was deeply relieved and felt very happy. He sacrificed one hundred camels on behalf of his son. He raised Abdullah until he grew up and married Aminah bint Wahab.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Abdullah did not live long; he died when his would-be son, Muhammad, was only two months old in pregnancy.

Muslim biographers wrote that Muhammad was born in the year of the Elephant, which corresponds to 570 C. E. Although the *Qur'an* mentions the story of the army that came to Mecca with elephants to destroy the *Ka'aba*,¹⁵ no reference is made in the *Qur'an* as to whether Muhammad was born in that year or not. However, since Arabs at that time were illiterate and had a vague concept of time, Muhammad's

¹³ Haykal, p. 39.

¹⁴ In Arab culture, married women retain their father's name. They do not adopt their husbands' names. Also knowing one's father's name is essential due to the importance accorded to tribal genealogy in Arabia.

¹⁵ The story of the army which came to Mecca with elephants is mentioned in the *Qur'an* 105:1-5. It is the story of Abrahah, the Abyssinian, who came to Mecca to destroy the house of God, *Ka'aba*, but God prevented him and his army from destroying it. Muslims consider this to be a miracle in that the *Ka'aba* was built by the Prophet Abraham, and they believe that God has promised to preserve and protect it from destruction until the Day of Judgment.

birth was reckoned according to the big event that happened around that time. The exact year of the birth of Muhammad is questionable because of conflicting information. Oriental Islamic scholars now argue that the exact birthday of Muhammad is unknown. They base their argument on external evidence concerning the chronological historical events of the year of the Elephant (*am al-fil*), which they allege occurred in 551 C. E.¹⁶ It was the time when Abraha, the Abyssinian ruler of Yemen, attempted to destroy the *Ka'aba* to attract and draw Arab peoples to the temple he built in Yemen. He wanted to make his temple the center of religiosity and pilgrimage; he did not succeed. It was that time Muslims claim that Muhammad was born.

Muslim biographers concur that Muhammad was born in the year of the Elephant and seem not to care about whether that year corresponded to 570 C. E. or not.¹⁷ Perhaps the implication is that if the year of the Elephant was to be dated as early as 551 C. E., as Lawrence Conrad suggested in his work, the beginning of revelation to Muhammad would not be at the age of 40, for Muhammad then would be 60 years old. Hence, at the time of his death, he would have been 83 years old. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad was born during the year of the Elephant, which many historians date as year 570 C. E. Muslim historians pay little attention to the exact date of his birth. What is important to them, they argue, is the message he brought.

The *Qur'an* narrates how Abraha's army and his elephants were destroyed by flights of birds striking them with stones of baked clay. The element of baked clay can be compared to hail storm nowadays.

Have thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the owners of the elephants? Did He not bring their stratagem to naught and send against them swarms of flying creatures (*Tairan Ababila*), which pelted them with stones of baked clay, and made them like green crops devoured (by cattle)? (*Qur'an* 105:1-5)

16 Lawrence Conrad: "Some Observations Apropos of Chronology and Literary Topoi in the Early Arabic Historical Tradition" in North, Alberrecht; Conrad, Lawrence I, ed; Bonner, Michael, tr., *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source Critical Study* (N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994): 225-240.

17 Haykal, p. 48.

While many Muslims believe literally that God sent attacking birds against Abraha's army, some modern Muslim scholars and writers interpret the chapter metaphorically by suggesting that Abraha's army was inflicted with smallpox disease, which spread among his troops and prevented them from carrying out their plan of destroying the *Ka'aba*.¹⁸ It has also been suggested that although there were birds flying over Mecca, the Quraysh, who had withdrawn to the mountains around Mecca, were actually the ones who threw the stones (a weapon of war at that time) against the elephants and horses charging from the valleys. Whether the meanings of these verses are taken literally or not, Muslims believe that God saved the *Ka'aba* because it was a house originally erected for the worship of one God, even though the Arabs had turned it into a house of worship of the idols. But why should God assist the Quraysh people, who were polytheistic, over a Christian king, despite the fact that Christianity is claimed to be a revealed religion? This question cannot be answered easily. Perhaps Abraha was suspicious and it was his pride that led him to embark on such a destructive journey. His attempt is seen as an act of oppression against the innocent people of Mecca, and, since God condemns oppression against one another, God did not help Abraha. However, as told in the *Qur'an*, he failed and the *Ka'aba* remained the center of Arab religiosity before and after the advent of Islam.

Regardless of whether we know the exact birthday of Muhammad or not, Muslims are convinced that Muhammad became the Prophet and brought a message in the Arabic language from God to human beings. After his birth, Aminah, his mother, took care of him and nurtured him to become a mature man. She sought a nursing mother for him and sent him to a rural area to learn pure Arabic language and customs.

Muhammad's nurse was Halimah bint Abu Dhi'ab from the tribe of *Sa'd*. Muslim biographers narrate that she reluctantly accepted Muhammad, whom she felt was from a poor family, because she

18 Haykal, p. 41. One wonders why some modern Muslim writers deny the possibility of the story of the elephants and birds as stated in the *Qur'an*. If a person lives in Texas and sees how hail damages properties and lives, one would not deny the possibility of God sending birds or any other objects to destroy anything. When there is a heavy storm or hurricane or hail, the hail can destroy anything. Hail is a small ice block which falls during heavy rain or storm.

had found no other child to wean. However, Halimah reported that everything changed positively in her life as soon as she embraced Muhammad. Her life, which before was full of adversity, poverty, deprivation and destitution, changed into a happy and prosperous life. Her dry breasts swelled with abundant milk. The presence of Muhammad among them was noticed and Halimah's family gained great respect. Halimah nursed Muhammad for four years; he showed rapid growth and improvement, mentally and physically, until he was returned to his family in Mecca when he was nearly six years old.

There are some interesting stories about some miraculous events that happened to Muhammad when he was with Halimah. One of these stories was the case of the splitting of Muhammad's chest. It was narrated that one day when Muhammad was playing in the garden, two men in white clothes appeared to him. They took him, laid him down, opened his chest and took something out. What that thing was, nobody exactly knew; Muslim historians assume that those two men were angels. They think that the thing that was taken out was a black clot, which was considered to be the evil cells in Muhammad's heart. After this event, Halimah returned him to his mother fearing that the *jinn* (the non-human creatures who are the inhabitants of the subtle immaterial world) possessed him.¹⁹ Many Orientalists²⁰ and some Muslims suspect this veracity of this story. They believe that the spiritual quality of Muhammad did not depend on the splitting of his chest. God was capable of making Muhammad a righteous person without going through any mysterious agents or surgery.

On the other hand, some Muslims believe this story and that it happened when Muhammad was two and one-half years old. Muhammad's young friends, who were not more than four years old at that time, narrated the details of that event to Halimah. Those who do not believe this story argue that the narrators were children; their witness cannot be accepted for lack of credibility because they might

not know what happened exactly to Muhammad.²¹ It should also be pointed out that believing and non-believing in this story has little to do with the message of Islam. Nevertheless, some Sunni Muslims believe this story. They rely on the reports mentioned in the books of *Hadith*, especially the authentic collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim. Perhaps the splitting of Muhammad's chest can be understood metaphorically - that God helped Muhammad conquer his evil spirit (*Satan*) as he himself said later on many occasions.²²

After Muhammad had spent four years in the barren desert of Bani Sa'd, he was returned to his mother Aminah at Mecca. At that point he received fresh air for his health, pure Arabic language for his tongue, freedom for his soul, and learned Arab ethics and good manners; all influences that had lasting impressions on him. Aminah took good care of him. Within that very year Muhammad accompanied his mother to visit her relatives at *Yathrib* (a city later known as Medina). On her way back to Mecca, though, she fell sick at *Abwa'*, a village near *Yathrib*, and died. Aminah was buried there. Her maid, Barakat, took Muhammad back to Mecca; he was six years old then.

Barakat, known as *Umm Ayman*, was a black slave owned by Abdullah, Muhammad's father. After Abdullah's death, she was transferred to Aminah. Barakat had originally come from Abyssinia. She was the most beloved person to Aminah. When Barakat returned to Mecca with Muhammad, she continued to take care of him there. Muhammad knew only Barakat as his mother, until he grew up. Abd al-Muttalib, Muhammad's grandfather, allowed Barakat to nurse Muhammad, for she was highly respected and trusted in the Quraysh family. Muhammad never forgot Barakat's gentleness, kindness, compassion and service to him. Muhammad called her "**my second mother**." She lived with Muhammad and Khadijah when he married and she was one of the first women to believe in Muhammad and freed from slavery by him. When the persecution of the believers at Mecca became unbearable, Barakat immigrated to Abyssinia and called her people to Islam. Later, she returned to Mecca and then immigrated to Medina with other Muslims. At Medina, she taught the Muslim

19 For more information about the meaning of *jinn*, see Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1989), pp. 210-211.

20 Scholars who studied the cultures and civilizations of Eastern Asia and Middle East in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

21 For more information on this story see Haykal, pp. 49-51; Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder* (N.J Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1995), pp. 59-75.

22 Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Fiqh al-Sirah* (Understanding the life History of Muhammad), 7th ed., (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah, 1976), pp. 65-69.

women about Islam and was greatly loved by the people. Muhammad always respected her.

One day the Prophet announced publicly among his companions that: "He who wants to marry a lady from paradise (*al-Jannah*), let him marry Barakat." Everyone was shocked, for none expected Muhammad to give her such recognition. Zayd bin Harithah went to Muhammad and sought permission to marry her. Muhammad approved the marriage and Barakat eventually gave birth to Usamah bin Zayd, one of the Muslims' leaders after Muhammad. This is the story of Barakat, the second mother of Muhammad.²³ Unfortunately, most Muslim biographers neglect the role that Barakat (*Ummu Aiman*) played in Muhammad's development.

Abd al-Muttalib became the guardian of Muhammad after the death of his mother. He loved Muhammad greatly, but did not live long. Thus, Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, became his guardian. Abu Talib rose to the challenge, and raised and trained Muhammad well. He gave him all the care he could: he protected him, educated him, prepared him for the future, and taught him the skill of trade. He even took him to Syria (*al-Sham*) on a trade trip.

We are not exactly sure of what occurred during his trip to Syria; however, it is said that Muhammad met a Christian monk named Bahirah who observed in him the features of prophethood and advised Abu Talib to return him to Mecca so that he would not be hurt. He told Abu Talib that great things were in store for his brother's son. Eventually, Abu Talib and Muhammad returned to Mecca. It is from this story of Muhammad's travel to Syria that some Orientalists assume that Muhammad had contact with other religious leaders, the Rabbis, in Syria. They allege that he learned some incomplete information about Judaism and Christianity and later incorporated it into the *Qur'an*. They make reference to the story of Abraham, Solomon, and Jesus in the *Qur'an*. They argue that those stories, as narrated in the *Qur'an*, are similar, but do not correspond to the ones narrated in the Torah or the Gospels because Muhammad did not have the correct stories or information; he was misinformed. Many Christians still believe today

that Muhammad had no knowledge of Christianity and its doctrines, whereas the *Qur'an* is full of information about Christianity, Jesus, Mary, Abraham, Isaac and Moses.

The Life of Muhammad at Mecca

Muhammad resumed his normal life at Mecca after his return from Syria. He became a shepherd. He maintained that being a shepherd was the vocation of many of the prophets before him. Experience has shown that being a shepherd instills in one a sense of commitment, compassion, and an attitude of tolerance. For if a shepherd were to beat any goat, sheep, or camel whenever it strayed from the flock, he would beat it to death before reaching the ban. However, if a person was able to take care of goats and sheep for a few days or a month successfully, he would also be able to guide and protect human beings, who can only be handled with patience. All these engagements prepared Muhammad for his future vocation as a Prophet. Also, as he was growing up, he was very engaged in the social life in Mecca, except for the worship of the idols. Once, when he was asked to swear in the name of the Meccan goddesses: *al-Lat* and *al-Uzza*, he replied with the startling answer: "Do not ask me anything for the sake of these idols; I have never hated anything more." Although he was not involved in the worship of the idols as were the other people of Mecca, he did not withdraw from participation in the city's social and public life either.

It is reported that the *Ka'aba* was once destroyed by a heavy flood, and all the tribes participated in rebuilding it. However, they disagreed on who should put back the sacred black-stone (*hajar al-aswad*), which is believed to have descended from heaven or be the only remnant of the stone Prophet Abraham used in building the *Ka'aba* originally. The tribes believed that it would be a great honor for the tribe who put back the sacred black-stone. They could not reach an amicable solution until one of the Quraysh leaders, Abu Umayyah, the son of Mughirah, suggested that they should let the first person to pass through the gate of *Ka'aba* be the arbitrator on this issue. Fortunately, it was Muhammad who appeared first. All expressed their readiness to accept his verdict. Muhammad asked the assembly to bring him a robe. He spread it on the floor and put the sacred black-stone in the middle. He then asked

²³ For more information about Barakat and her role in the life of Prophet Muhammad, see: Mahmud Madhi al-Istanbuli and Mustafa Abu Nasr, *Nisa' Hawla al-Rasul (Women Around Muhammad)* (Jeddah, Saudi-Arabia: Maktabat al-Sawadi, 1995), pp. 235-237.

the leader of each clan to hold onto one edge of the robe. They all agreed and did what he requested. They jointly carried the black-stone to its designated area, the site of construction. There, Muhammad lifted the stone and laid it in its place. Every clan was happy and the dispute was solved.²⁴ The Quraysh loved Muhammad because of his noble character, great kindness, and honesty to the extent that people used to keep their money and valuable treasures with him. They knew that he would never deceive them. He was well respected and nicknamed the trustworthy (*al-Amin*). All this was before he became the Prophet.

Muhammad's Youth and Marriage to Khadijah

When economic hardship afflicted Abu Talib, mainly due to the number of members of his large family, he spoke to Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, one of the women merchants in Mecca, about employing Muhammad. Khadijah was a great trader and had many caravans which carried her goods from Mecca to Syria. She employed many people to work for her. She was known also to be kind and generous to her employees, and thus people competed to work for her. Since Muhammad was well known in the community for his hard work and truthfulness, Khadijah did not hesitate to hire him. She immediately arranged for him to lead her caravan to Syria (*al-Sham*). What a good job and experience for Muhammad! He took the challenge, traveled to Syria and came back with a lot of profit. Khadijah's maid, Maysarah, accompanied Muhammad on that journey. She was to keep record of and watch Muhammad's behavior and deeds. To Maysarah's surprise, Muhammad was consistently nice, trustful, and dedicated. She reported to Khadijah that she had never before met a trustworthy person like Muhammad. The good reports that Khadijah heard about Muhammad encouraged her to propose marriage to him. Muhammad could not believe that such a wealthy merchant would propose marriage to him, especially because of the age difference of fifteen years between the two. Khadijah was forty and Muhammad was twenty-five years old. Muhammad was poor and Khadijah was extremely rich. Khadijah was the employer and Muhammad the employee. Muhammad paid her a dowry as is the Arab's custom and she arranged a marriage ceremony. The marriage occurred fifteen years

²⁴ Al-Ghazali, pp. 84-85. See also Haykal, pp. 64-66.

before Muhammad became the Prophet. Despite all the differences, the master married her employee. Their marriage was successful and fruitful. Of course, Muhammad had not become the Prophet at that time. They enjoyed themselves.

It is pertinent to mention here that in Arab culture, age differences between the bride and bridegroom do not matter, even today. That is, a lady of forty can marry a man of twenty-five or less, as happened between Khadijah and Muhammad. Also, an old man of fifty can marry a teenage girl, as happened between Muhammad and A'ishah. When Muhammad married A'ishah, he was fifty-two years old and she was eleven. Some historians say that A'ishah was nine years old. In pre-arranged marriages, sexual relationship begins after the woman reaches the age of puberty, which differs from one country to another due to the climate.

Muhammad's marriage to Khadijah was a happy and successful one. They had six children: two boys and four daughters. The boys died when they were young and only one girl, Fatimah, outlived Muhammad. Khadijah supported Muhammad financially and spiritually before and after he became the Prophet. They had a wonderful life, full of enjoyment and accomplishment. They spent twenty-five years in prosperity and happiness. Khadijah died at the age of sixty five and Muhammad did not marry another wife until after her death. He loved her so much that he used to tell his new wives about her. Those wives were, at times, jealous of Khadijah, despite the fact that they did never meet her. Muhammad often praised Khadijah by saying that when he was poor, she enriched him, and when the people of Mecca called him a liar, she believed in him; when they rejected him, she accommodated him.

After the death of Khadijah, Muhammad waited for two to three years before he married another wife. Subsequently, he married for various reasons. These reasons include:

- a) An attempt to take care of the community's orphans and the destitute, such as in his marriage with Sawdah bint Zama, whose husband died in Abyssinia and left her with many children;
- b) To establish proper law and customs, such as with his marriage with Zaynab, whom many people thought was the wife of his adopted

son, Zayd. Children belong to their biological parents, he taught, regardless of who raises them when they are young;

- c) To set free the slaves captured during the wars with the Quraysh and other Arabs in the peninsula, as with his marriage to Juwayriyyah, whose family and tribes were set free because of Muhammad's marriage to her; and
- d) To build friendly alliances or cement social relations between the tribes, such as with his marriage to A'ishah, whose father was Muhammad's closest friend, as well as his marriage to Umm Habibah bint Abu Sufyan, whose father was the greatest enemy to Muhammad at Mecca. By marrying Umm Habibah, the enmity was reduced and her father later converted to Islam. Abu Sufyan's son, Muawiyah, became the first leader of the Umayyad Empire from 661-680 C. E.

Muhammad's marriages were all exceptional. There are a few prophets in the Old Testament who married more than one wife, such as Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon. Islam permits a Muslim to marry more than one wife when necessary. The permission is based on the condition that the husband treats all his wives justly, according to the *Qur'anic* injunction. Seeking permission from the first wife is not a prerequisite for marrying a second wife in Islam, as some Western writers have suggested. However, it is better in the long run for the husband to let his first wife know that he is ready to marry another wife so as to have a peaceful home. More attention will be given to this topic in our discussion on women in Islam in Chapter Eight. It is always better to marry one wife for it is hard to do justice between two wives or treat them equally.

The Beginning of the Revelation to Muhammad

Muhammad lived a normal life at Mecca and occasionally escaped to the mountains for meditation. He practiced his devotion in a cave called Hira. Little is known about the nature of his meditation on Mount Hira. One day, when Muhammad was around the age of forty, the archangel Gabriel appeared to him during his meditation. Muhammad became frightened because he had never seen an angel before and did not know why this one approached him. The angel asked him to recite

and he responded that he could not recite, for he did not know how to read or write. Gabriel forcefully grabbed Muhammad again and asked him to recite, but he responded that he did not know how to recite. However, when Gabriel asked him the third time, Muhammad instead asked him what to recite. The answer came:

Recite in the name of your Lord, who created. He created human beings from a clot of congealed blood. Recite, and your Lord is the most generous, most honorable. He has taught by the pen, He taught human being that which s/he knew not. (*Qur'an* 96:1-5).

The divine knowledge that Muhammad received from God is known as the "*Qur'an*." It is a revelation because its source is divine. The knowledge of it was given to Muhammad by God and was engraved onto his heart. Muhammad did not know it before; he had no means of acquiring it by himself. This was the beginning of Muhammad's communication with God.

Having had that first experience of the divine, Muhammad ran home to inform his wife about what had happened to him. Khadijah comforted him, and assured him that God would not deceive him. He requested that Khadijah cover him up when he was in that condition, but another revelation came down, stating:

O you who is wrapped up in a cloak, arise and deliver the warning (to humans), magnify your Lord. Keep your garment free and clean (from stain), that is, purify it; shun all abomination; expect not, in giving any increase (for yourself) but for your Lord's cause; be patient and constant. (*Qur'an* 74:1-7).

Muhammad fully recognized the magnitude of the message he had just received. He had to call people to believe in Islam; he had become a prophet of God.

In order to be sure of the nature and the significance of the message that Muhammad received, Khadijah took him to her uncle, Waraqah bin Nawfal, who was described as *hanif* (one who believed in monotheism). Muhammad narrated his story to him and Waraqah assured him of the genuineness of the message. He confirmed that Muhammad would

become a prophet to his people. He promised to assist Muhammad if he were alive when his tribe exiled him. Waraqah added:

Thou will be called a liar, and be ill-treated. They will cast thee out and make war upon thee; and if I live to see that day, God knowest, I will help His cause.²⁵

Muhammad wondered why he would be exiled if he were truly a messenger from God. Nawfal told him that that is the nature of human beings. No one has ever brought his people such a new message such as you have brought without meeting hostility, he said. Waraqah's reassurance and Khadijah's support gave Muhammad the motivation he needed. From then on, Muhammad began to spread Islam. Khadijah was the first person to believe in him; his immediate relatives soon followed, especially his cousin, Ali bin Abi Talib, who became the first youth to believe in Islam. Muhammad began spreading Islam and inviting his friends to Islam secretly. Steadily and without compromise, he stood to the challenge and continuously called the Meccan people to embrace Islam and submit totally to one God, *Allah*. Many rejected his call and dismissed his messages, but he never gave up.

The Core Message of Muhammad at Mecca

Muhammad brought many messages to his people, but his main invitation to the people of Mecca was direct and specific. He called them to believe in the unity of God (*tawhid*). He preached that God is only one; he has no partner, no son, and no helper. Thus, all the gods the people of Quraysh were worshipping were declared false gods and should be discarded. These gods could not help themselves nor assist others, Muhammad argued. Such a radical call to the unity of God was a shock to the Quraysh, who clung strongly to polytheism. They were alarmed by his message because he deviated from their custom and disrespected their idols. As reported in the *Qur'an*, they said to Muhammad: "Has He (your God) made the gods (all) into one God? Truly this is a wonderful thing!" (*Qur'an* 38:5) However, Muhammad insisted on monotheism (the worship of one god) and affirmed that God is the Creator and all other things are his creations. This concept

²⁵ Martin Ling, *Muhammad: His Life Based on Earliest Sources* (Indiana, Plainfield American Trust Publication, 1983), p. 44.

of the belief in the unity of God is known in Islam as the concept of *Tawhid*—the bedrock of Islam.

Muhammad also called on them to believe in resurrection after death and the Day of Judgment. He emphasized that life on earth is temporary; that every soul shall die, then be resurrected, and stand before God for the final judgment. This will be followed by eternal bliss in paradise for those who believed in and obeyed God and did good deeds. There is eternal life in hell-fire for those who disbelieved and did not repent before they died. To Muhammad, the human being in this life is a traveler. The real destination is the life after, which is believed to be a new world. However, Muslims believe that they will only be rewarded for their good deeds or punished for their wrong actions. Thus, everyone is accountable to God. Muhammad also preached the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), that is, to free their minds from harboring any hatred or envy against any one.

Building good relationships in the community was another issue that Muhammad strongly emphasized at Mecca. He preached that all humans should recognize that they are creatures of one God and that they are equal before Him. Muhammad exhorted his followers to help one another, even when economically hard-pressed; he told them they work for the peace of all human beings and should administer justice at all times. He pointed out that it is through good deeds and justice in society that human beings can live together peacefully. To the Meccan people, these were strange ideas. Muhammad's call fell on deaf ears; they did not listen to him, except for a few.

Muhammad's Struggle Continues at Mecca

The first three years following Muhammad becoming the Prophet were spent on inviting the Quraysh to believe in Islam. He called them one by one, secretly, so as not to provoke opposition. He invited his immediate family first. Some of his friends believed in him and those friends invited their friends too. At the end of the third year, he was instructed by God to take his message to the public. He gathered the Quraysh at Mount *Safa* at Mecca and declared publicly that he was the Prophet of God.

O people of Quraysh, said Muhammad, I warn you to fear God's punishment. Save yourselves from the fire. My position is the same as that of the sentry who sees the enemy from afar and warns his people of the danger of their enemies. Does such a person ever lie to his people? They said no.²⁶

When Muhammad told them that he came to admonish them not to do evil deeds, some of them immediately rebuked him and said that he was a liar; they mocked him. From that point on, the public struggle between believers and non-believers began. The leaders and the nobles of the Quraysh rejected Islam and its Prophet, thinking that Islam would disturb and threaten their economy, rob them of their leadership positions, take the pride of being the keepers of the idols at Mecca from them, and make them equal in status to all other members of the society. On the other hand, Muhammad's speech enabled many of them to think thoroughly, and gave hope and new life to those who had been oppressed by the leaders of the Quraysh, the Meccan oligarchy. Eventually, a few people followed Muhammad and among them were some of the nobles of Mecca, such as Abu Bakr, Uthman, Talhah, and Abd al-Rahman bin Awf. These companions later became the leaders of the Muslims. The people of Quraysh were totally agitated; their anger rose and they were determined to fight Muhammad by all means and with whatever weapons they had. And so they did.

Since they could not stop Muhammad from preaching or from converting people to Islam due to his noble background, they decided to negotiate with him through his uncle, Abu Talib, one of the leaders of the Quraysh. They requested that Abu Talib appeal to Muhammad to stop talking against their idols and stop preaching Islam. They promised to give Muhammad whatever he liked if he stopped. They offered to let him be their chief and promised to bestow upon him whatever honor and social title he wanted.²⁷ He rejected their offers and continued delivering his message. Steadily, he won more converts. The Quraysh leaders feared that if Muhammad's message was accepted and the idols

were abandoned, they would lose their honor, wealth and power. In short, Muhammad's message posed a threat to Meccan religious values, to their tribal customs, as it questioned the status of their ancestors and their ways of life. Specifically, it challenged their polytheism. Since the Quraysh could not stop Muhammad, they resorted to violence and punished his followers, especially the slaves and the weak. The case of Bilal bin Rabah is a vivid example of the extent to which the Quraysh went in persecuting some of the believers at Mecca.

Bilal bin Rabah was an Abyssinian slave at Mecca and his master was Umayyah bin Khalaf. Bilal heard of Islam through Abu Bakr and converted. It did not take him long to announce his Islam publicly. He renounced the idols and this renunciation subjected him to immediate torture and humiliation by his ruthless master, Umayyah bin Khalaf. Due to instigation from Abu Jahl (a relative of Muhammad and one of the leaders of the Quraysh), Umayyah tied Bilal with rope and drove him around the city of Mecca. The children shouted and mocked him for disobeying and rejecting the religion of his master. Whenever the shouting reached a tempo, and the punishment reached its extreme, Bilal would repeat the phrase: "*Abad Abad*," One One. That is "God is one, God is one," a phrase which continuously provoked Umayyah's anger. Those were the exact words he wanted Bilal to shun. When Bilal did not yield to threats and torture, Umayyah chained him and put him under the blazing sun of Mecca to force him to succumb. Yet Bilal repeatedly said: "*Abad Abad*," "God is one, God is one." He courageously resisted all the threats and punishments and remained firm in his faith. Eventually, Abu Bakr, after much appeal and negotiation, bought Bilal from slavery and set him free. Bilal became a great companion of the Prophet and immigrated to Medina, where he was appointed the first *Muezzin* (a person who calls others to prayer) for the Prophet Muhammad.²⁸ Bilal remained a respected Muslim and very active in the community until he died in Medina.

Muhammad insisted on preaching Islam and teaching his followers about its basics at a house known as *Dar al-Arqam*. The Quraysh continued to persecute his followers. When the situation became unbearable, Muhammad advised some of them to seek refuge with the Christian king of Abyssinia, the Negus (*Najashi*), who had protected 28 For more information about Bilal and his life see: Muhammad Abdu Rauf, *Bilal Ibn Rabah* (Indiana, Plainfield: American Trust Publications, 1977).

26 Dar Rah Haqq's Board of Writers, Translated by N. Tawheedi, *A Glance at the Life of the Holy Prophet of Islam* (New York: Mostazafan Foundation of New York, 1984), p. 64.

27 Haykal, pp. 96-97.

the Muslims during their stay there. Muslims immigrated to Abyssinia twice. It should be noted that Islam was introduced to Africa before it was introduced to Medina. Meccan Muslims immigrated to Abyssinia in 615 C. E., before they immigrated to Medina in 622 C. E. This emigration to Ethiopia is referred to as the first emigration (*Hijrah*) in Islam. The Quraysh sent its ambassador to Negus, the king of Axum, to ask for the return of the Muslims, but Negus refused. King Negus arranged a meeting between Muslims and Quraysh delegates to hear their complaints. He asked each group to present his case and both did. And this is what the ambassador of the Muslims, Ja'far bin Abi Talib, said:

O King, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devoured the weak. That was our condition until God sent us an apostle whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and renounce the stones, and images, which our fathers and we formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and kindly hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify not chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, and he gave us orders about prayer, alms-giving, and fasting (enumerating the commands of Islam). We confessed his truth and believe in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God alone without association (aught) with Him. We treated as forbidden what he forbade, and as lawful what he declared lawful. Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil

deeds we once committed. When they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and came between us and our religion, we came to your country, having chosen you above all others. Here we are happy in your protection, and we hope that we shall not be treated unjustly while we are with you, O King.²⁹

Hence, Negus gave the Muslims a warm reception and allowed them to practice their religion as they wanted. After listening to the recitation of the *Qur'an* about the Virgin Mary, Negus wept and endorsed what the *Qur'an* says about Mary and Jesus.

Those who remained at Mecca with Muhammad struggled day and night to practice their new religion. Yet, they did not escape from the Meccan people's derision, mockery, and persecution. The Quraysh boycotted the Muslims for three years by not buying from or selling to them; they subjected them to great hardship to the extent that they could not find food to eat. Consequently, Muhammad himself sought refuge in the nearby town of Taif. Even there he was unwelcome, turned down, humiliated, and stoned with pebbles until he bled. Yet, he was not angry with them; rather he prayed for them that they become Muslims and protectors of Islam. He fled back to Mecca, but the persecution continued. At that point, Muhammad fervently prayed to God for His support and said:

O God, please consider my weakness, my shortage of means, and the little esteem that people have of me. Oh, most Merciful God, You are the Lord of the oppressed, and you are my Lord. To whom would You leave my fate? To a stranger who insults me? Or to an enemy who dominates me? ... Your pleasure alone is my objective. I pray that I may not become the object of Your wrath and anger. ... There is neither power nor strength except in You.³⁰

29 Sulayman S. Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America* (Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc., 1999), p. 117.

30 Haykal, p. 137.

Nevertheless, with the appeal of a very small influential group in Mecca, the boycott of Muhammad and his relatives was lifted, but the damage had been done. Within the period of the boycott, Muhammad and his followers had suffered tremendously. After the boycott, he took his message to the public, from door to door, and from tribe to tribe. Only a few people believed in him, but he persisted vigorously, and occasionally, he won some converts.

The *Isra'* and *Miraj* (Muhammad's Journey to Heaven) in 620 C. E

Another big event in Muhammad's life in Mecca after the boycott was his ascendance or journey to heaven, known as *Isra'* and *Miraj*. Muhammad was taken by the angel Gabriel from the *Ka'aba* at Mecca to Jerusalem, and from there to the seventh heaven, where Muhammad is believed to have had discussions with God. He then returned to Jerusalem and back to Mecca. This event took place within one night and is mentioned in the *Qur'an* 17:1, and 53: 7-18. God states in the *Qur'an* that the purpose of the night journey was to show Muhammad some of God's signs. Muhammad witnessed those signs physically and reported to his followers what he saw. *Qur'an* states:

Glory to God who did take His servant (Muhammad) on a journey by night from the sacred mosque (in Mecca) to the farthest mosque (masji al-Aqsa) whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him (Muhammad) some of our signs; for He (God) is the One who heareth and seeth (all things). *Qur'an* 17:1.

Muslim biographers have recorded many different things that happened to Muhammad during that night journey. Some of them believe it is the story of how the five daily prayers were established and the meeting of Muhammad with other prophets and messengers of God and his prayer with them. Muslims believe that the establishment of the daily prayer was given to Muhammad when he went to heaven to visit God. The story states that God told Muhammad to pray fifty times daily and Muhammad accepted that offer. On his way back to

earth, he met the Prophet Moses at the third heaven, who asked him of what he received from God. When Muhammad told Moses about the fifty prayers per day, he asked Muhammad to return to God and seek a reduction in the number of prayers, which he did. Moses argued that he was a Prophet before Muhammad and due to his experience with his followers, he recognized that human beings are lazy. He argued that Muhammad's followers might not be ready to pray fifty times daily. Muhammad went back to God and sought a reduction. It was reduced to forty five and again Moses appealed to Muhammad to go back to God and seek more reduction. Muhammad continued to go between Moses and God until the prayers were reduced to five. Moses even asked Muhammad to ask for two daily prayers but Muhammad was too shy to go back to God. Muhammad said that five prayers were good enough.

Muhammad was also shown the picture of heaven and the enjoyment preserved for the true believers on the Day of Judgment, along with the horrible punishment to be meted to disbelievers. The stories of what Muhammad saw and what happened to him during the night journey are contained in the book of *Hadith*. Some Muslims believe that many of these stories are not authentic. As stated before, believing or not believing in them has nothing to do with the message of Islam itself. That Muhammad made a journey to heaven is totally believed by Muslims because it is mentioned in the *Qur'an*.

After his return to Mecca, Muhammad told his story to the people. They were astonished; some believed him, but the majority did not. Those who doubted him mocked him and said:

By God, camels run continually for a whole month to reach *al-Sham* (Jerusalem) and another whole month to return. Would Muhammad achieve such a feat in one night?³¹

Again, the Quraysh taunted Muhammad and instigated others to disbelieve him. However, the believers accepted what Muhammad told them as the only truth, especially his close friend Abu Bakr. He said that since he believed Muhammad to be a prophet, he also believed that he went to heaven. It was through his unshaken belief in Muhammad

31 Haykal, p. 146.

that Abu Bakr acquired the nickname *al-Siddiq* – the true believer. *Isra'* became a great motivation to Muhammad and assured him that God was with him and that he was not abandoned by Him. Some Muslims, past and present, say that Muhammad's journey was not a physical journey but a spiritual one, like a dream. However, the majority of Muslims strongly believe that it was both physical and spiritual, and that there is no contradiction in it at all, for God is powerful enough to enable His servant do whatever He wants him to do.

Muhammad's Meeting With the People of (Yathrib) Medina

After the event of *Isra'*, Muhammad secretly met with the tribes of *Aus* and *Khazraj* who came from *Yathrib* (later known as Medina) for pilgrimage to Mecca in 621 C. E. He invited them to Islam and a handful of them converted. The following year, in 622 C. E., he met with another group and concluded a treaty of allegiance (*bay'at al-aqabah*) with them. The believers from Medina thereupon promised to receive him and his followers, and protect and support Muslims if they were to be exiled from Mecca. They pledged that they would defend him as they would defend their own wives, children and property. This pledge was later known as "*Bay'at al-Aqabah*," the treaty of *al-Aqabah*. Nevertheless, Muhammad appealed to the Quraysh on several occasions to believe in God and in him as the last Prophet, and in the Day of Judgment. His message received no serious attention; yet he continued inviting them steadily and peacefully. He only succeeded in winning a few members.

In 619 C. E., Khadijah, Muhammad's wife, and his uncle Abu Talib died. With their deaths, Muhammad lost his most steadfast supporters and protectors. He became vulnerable to the people of Mecca and their persecution, which led to endless suffering. They subjected him and his followers to terrible hardship and severe torture in an attempt to force him to abandon Islam. The Quraysh were able to convince their allies to fight Muhammad and persecute the Muslims. Eventually, the people of Mecca collectively decided to assassinate Muhammad when they found that all other attempts to persuade him failed to change his mind. When the persecution became unbearable, he permitted his

followers to immigrate to Medina secretly. He joined them in July, 622 C. E. Many of his followers secretly traveled to Medina, except Umar, who announced his migration and asked publicly that anyone who wanted to lose his life should obstruct him if he dared. Many of those who immigrated to Medina left their wives and properties at Mecca. The Quraysh confiscated those properties.

The Emigration (*Hijrah*) of the Prophet to *Yathrib*

Muhammad's migration to Medina was a turning point in Islamic history. As the antagonism of the Quraysh increased, Muhammad sought refuge in Medina with the hope that he would be able to spread his religion and build a Muslim community there. But he did not know when he would emigrate. Consequently, when he learned that the tribes of Quraysh had plotted to assassinate him with the intention of sharing the bloodguilt, he told his friend Abu Bakr to prepare for the journey. He and Abu Bakr planned and took all necessary steps to make sure that they would not be caught on the way to Medina. They hired an experienced guide, Abdullah bin Urayqit, to lead them to Medina. On the day of his traveling, he asked Ali bin Abi Talib, his cousin, to sleep on his bed to trick the Quraysh. Ali slept on Muhammad's bed, but the Quraysh did not harm him. It is pertinent to mention here that Ali was ready to sacrifice his life for the life of Muhammad. Fortunately, the Quraysh recognized Ali and did not harm him. They were looking for Muhammad and not for Ali. Muhammad secretly left his home at midnight and escaped with Abu Bakr to a cave (*Thaur*) near Mecca, where they hid for three days. A Bedouin escort later led them to Medina through back roads. The story of their escape to the mountain in Mecca is mentioned in the *Qur'an*.

If ye help not (your leader, Muhammad), it is no matter, for God did indeed help him, when the unbelievers drove him out. He had no more than one companion. They two were in the Cave, and he said to his companion, 'have no fear, for God is with us.' (*Qur'an* 9:40)

When the Quraysh recognized that Muhammad had escaped, they offered a reward of one hundred camels to whoever would bring him back, alive or dead. Suraqah, one of the Quraysh's warriors, took the challenge. He mounted his horse and rode after Muhammad. He saw the Prophet on his way to Medina, talked with him, but could not bring him back to Mecca, because his horse could not reach Muhammad; its feet sank in the sand. Suraqah recognized immediately that he would not be able to reach Muhammad. He called upon Muhammad and he answered him. He told Suraqah that he would become a Muslim and that one day, he would wear the necklace of the King of Persia. Suraqah did not believe him. But as time passed and Muhammad died, Suraqah did become a Muslim and joined the Muslim army that fought the Persians. In one of the battles, Suraqah received the necklace of the King of Persia, Kisrah, as his entitlement from the spoils of the war.

Muhammad reached Medina safely after ten days of journey on September 24, 622 C. E. He was well received by the believers at Medina, the *Ansar* (helpers), who were waiting for his arrival. At Mecca, Ali, Muhammad's cousin, returned the properties and wealth entrusted to Muhammad to their owners before he joined Muhammad at Medina. While in Mecca, he collected information for Muhammad and kept him informed of what was going on. Despite the fact that Muhammad had left Mecca, the Quraysh never relented; they continued to torture the remaining believers until many of them immigrated to Medina. It was at Medina that Muhammad had a great number of followers, established himself as the Prophet, the politician, and the real role model and leader of the Muslims.

This migration is recognized in Islam as *Hijrah*. It was a remarkable event that marks the escape of the Muslims from Mecca to Medina; a physical journey from a place where Muslims could not practice their religion to a place where they had freedom to practice their beliefs publicly. Those Muslims who made *Hijrah* were known as immigrants (*muhajirun*). Muslims date their calendar from the time of *Hijrah* and not from the birth or death of Muhammad, as other traditions do in relation to their founders. The Islamic calendar has twelve months. Each month consists of twenty nine or thirty days, based on a lunar calendar. It began on July 16, 622 C. E., the date when Muhammad left Mecca.

Summary

Islam, one of the major religions of the world, invites its adherents to submit themselves completely to the guidance of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the *Qur'an*. One out of every five persons in the world is a Muslim. It is a religion of peace that unites its adherents through a common faith and language (Arabic). Its adherents believe in one God, *Allah*. Islam originally emerged at Mecca in Arabia in the seventh century and then spread to the Arabian Peninsula within a short time after the death of Muhammad. Before its advent, the Arabs were polytheistic, and believed that their idols were intermediaries to the Supreme God, whom they also called *Allah*. Before Islam came, Arabia was no-man's land, a free country for Bedouins. The Arabs then had no central government. Each tribe was headed by a leader (*shaykh*), whose survival depended on his power to raid and subjugate others.

In 570 C. E., Muhammad was born and raised at Mecca. In his youth, he earned the title of *al-Amin* (a trustworthy person). He was energetic, religious, and ambitious. He used to escape to Mount Hira for meditation until he was called to prophethood around the age of forty. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to him and informed him that God chose him to be the Prophet. He came back to his people, called them to the belief in one God and to recognize him as the last messenger of God.

Muhammad took his message seriously and invited his people to belief in *Allah* as the Creator of all things. The Quraysh turned deaf ears to him and deliberately persecuted him and his followers. Meccan opposition to Muhammad intensified as the number of his followers grew and as the content of his message became clearer. He drew the attention of the Quraysh to the natural signs of the Creator: the earths, the heavens, the skies, animals, vegetables, the alternation of day and night, and the sun and moon. He affirmed to them that all things are creatures of God, and that human beings, in particular, would definitely die, resurrect, and stand in final judgment. The Meccan people did not believe in all these things. They perceived Muhammad and his message as a big threat to their existence and wealth. By accepting Islam, they thought, they would lose their power and prestige over other Arabs. They were afraid that no one would come to Mecca anymore to worship

the idols, which was a source for them of a great deal of wealth and pride.

The Meccans fought Muhammad and his followers with all their power. Physically, they punished him, boycotted him, deserted his family, and tortured his disciples, which resulted in the deaths of some of them and the reversion of some others to polytheism. They prevented marriages with Muslims and spread unfounded rumors about Muhammad, calling him a liar and a possessed person. They also accused his followers of many untrue things to try to break their morale and tarnish their honor. In addition, they exercised economic sanctions against them. They boycotted the Muslims by not buying from or selling to them for three years. These are called the years of famine.

Despite all these sanctions, Muhammad insisted on preaching Islam to whomever he could and simultaneously taught his members about the *Qur'an* as he received it. He spent thirteen years in Mecca, whereby he trained his first disciples and taught them the foundations of Islam. Although he had many enemies there, he never fought them because Muslims were in the minority. God did not allow him to fight back against the Meccans. He continued to carry his message until he won a good number of followers. Through them, he introduced his new religion to the people of Medina, who welcomed him and gave him support. Muhammad finally emigrated in 622 C. E. There he spent the rest of his life preaching his religion and forming an Islamic state until he died in 632 C. E. in Medina without choosing a successor.

Suggested Readings

There are a plethora of books and articles written on how Islam began and about the life of Muhammad. Readers are encouraged to check their libraries for more information and for new books.

1. Armstrong, Karen, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992).
2. Denny, Frederick M., *Islam and the Muslim Community* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987).

3. Esposito, John, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
4. Farah, E. Caesar, *Islam* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1994).
5. Haykal, Muhammad H., *The Life of Muhammad* (Plainfield, Indiana: American Trust Publications, 1995).
6. Schimmel, Annemarie, *Islam: An Introduction* (New York: SUNY, 1992).
7. Suzanne, Haneef, *What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims* (Des Plaines, IL: Library of Islam, 1985).
8. Tayob, Abdulkader, *Islam: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: One World, 1999).
9. Waines, David, *An Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

CHAPTER 2

Islam and Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad at Medina (*Yathrib*)

Muhammad's Arrival at Medina (*Yathrib*)

When the people of Mecca attempted to kill Muhammad for his insistence on preaching Islam and converting the *Quraysh* to Islam, he secretly immigrated to (*Yathrib*). This city was later named *Madinat al-Rasul* (the city of the Prophet). He and his friend Abu Bakr, who later became his father-in-law, secretly hid themselves on Mount *Thaur* at Mecca for three days. Many things happened to him during this journey, but we'll only focus on one story here. It is reported that when Muhammad and Abu Bakr were hidden in the cave, a spider built its web over the gate of the cave. Hence, when the people of Mecca arrived at the gate, they were confused and said that if Muhammad were in the cave, the spider's web would not be there. At that very particular time, Abu Bakr was looking at them and shivering. He was so panicked that he told Muhammad that if the *Quraysh* were to look at their feet, they would see them. Muhammad assured him that God would protect them and that they would not be detected because they were not alone in the cave - God was with them.

After three days, they left the cave and headed toward Medina. The *Quraysh* sent an envoy to search for Muhammad and bring him back dead or alive. He who would achieve that would be given a huge payment of 100 camels. Suraqat, one of the *Quraysh* horsemen, took

the challenge and ran after Muhammad. He found him but could not reach him because his horse stumbled and was reluctant to move forward, despite all the attempts by Suraqat to persuade him. Hence, Suraqat recognized that Muhammad might have been protected by God. So he returned to Mecca without Muhammad. Suraqat later became a Muslim. Muhammad and Abu Bakr continued their journey and arrived at Medina on September 24, 622 C. E.

The people of Medina, including the Jews, received them at *Quba* (a suburb of Medina). They were very happy at Muhammad's arrival, singing and beating drums as they informed one another about the event. He stayed with Bani Amr bin Awf for fourteen days³² at *Quba* before moving to the city of Medina. It was at *Quba* that he conducted the first Friday prayer. At Medina he initially stayed with Abu Ayub al-Ansari for a few days. Many Muslims at Medina wanted Muhammad to stay with them, but he insisted that he would stay where his camel stopped. The camel stopped between Sahl and Suhayl's pieces of land and there Muhammad stayed. He later bought a piece of land himself and built his house and a mosque there,³³ where believers prayed and met together on daily basis without any disturbances, as was the case in Mecca. Such gatherings in Mecca were unthinkable, for believers were always subjected to verbal harassment and physical persecution from the *Quraysh*.

It was from the mosque at Medina that the Prophet Muhammad began to organize his followers to form a community of believers. From the mosque, he carried out his religious and social activities of calling people to Islam, teaching them about the new religion, and advising them on many social, political and religious issues. It should be noted too that before Muhammad's arrival, those believers from Medina whom he met at Mecca and had delegated as his ambassadors, had prepared for his arrival and told the people of Medina about Islam. Nearly every house in Medina, except for those occupied by the Jews, had a convert to Islam before Muhammad's arrival.

At Medina, Muhammad united the Muslims by joining the believers from Mecca with believers from Medina, so that each one saw him/herself as a brother or sister to other Muslims. This religious bond

32 Some report said that he stayed for only three days and left to Medina.

33 Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Fiqh al-Sirah*, 7 ed. (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah) 1976), p. 191. See also *Qur'an* 9: 108.

was so strong that they could even inherit from one another. This is known in Islam as Islamic brotherhood (*al-Ukhuwah al-Islamiyyah*). It is a concept introduced by Muhammad whereby a believer at Medina (*al-Ansar*) would choose a friend from Mecca (*al-Muhajir*) and both would pledge to become friends and supporters of each another. The implication was that the *Ansar* at Medina would accommodate his friend from Mecca and help him adjust and assimilate to situations in Medina. He would also support him financially until the immigrant could depend on himself. Abdu al-Rahman bin Awf, one of the immigrants from Mecca, engaged in trading and profited a lot of money; he settled down and got married.³⁴

One day Abdu al-Rahman attended the mosque and the Prophet observed that he looked fresher. The Prophet asked him about his condition. He told Muhammad that he just gotten married at Medina. Hence, the Prophet congratulated him and prayed for him. The brotherhood, which was established between the helpers (the *Ansar*) and the immigrants (the *Muhajirun*), transcended blood relations and tribal customs. It united the Muslims into one solid nation with a unique loyalty to Islam.³⁵ This Islamic brotherhood overshadowed all other relations and allowed Muslims to cooperate educationally by teaching one another and politically by removing all tribal and ethnic barriers.

Another important step that Muhammad took while at Medina was to forge an alliance with the other religious groups at Medina: the Jews and the Arabs. He wrote a treaty of mutual obligation between Muslims and non-Muslims. They all pledged to live together peacefully and each group was guaranteed freedom of worship. Part of the covenant reads:

Muslims and Jews were to have equal status. If a Jew was wronged, then he must be helped to gain his right by both Muslims and Jews and so also if a Muslim was wronged. In case of war against the polytheists, they [Muslims and Jews] must fight as one people, and neither Jews nor Muslims were to make a separate peace,

but peace was to be indivisible. In case of differences of opinion or dispute or controversy, the matter was to be referred to God through his messenger.³⁶

The treaty also pointed out that Islam recognizes the existence of other religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. The treaty was aimed at securing a peaceful co-existence at Medina. Every group was free to practice its own religion. Although the Jews accepted and signed the treaty in the beginning, the relationship with the Muslims became strained within a short period of time, when it was clear to the Jews that Muhammad would not accept Judaism as his religion. Muhammad invited the Bedouin Arabs at Medina to sign the treaty so that all could live together in harmony.

In addition, the Prophet settled the tribal wars between the tribes of 'Auw and *Khazraj*. These tribes had been fighting one another for centuries. Whenever each group achieved power, it resumed the war. When Muhammad reached Medina, he arbitrated between them and appealed to both parties to stop killing. Fortunately, they listened to him and he put an end to their century-old grievances. Both parties surrendered to the leadership of Muhammad and that allowed him to organize the Muslim community. As Muhammad settled down at Medina, he participated in the daily affairs of the community. He received more revelations from God concerning various events that were happening at Medina due to the conversion of many people to Islam.

The Muslims from Mecca (the *Muhajirun*) began to settle down. In the beginning, they were seriously affected by the terrible weather in Medina. Many of them became sick. As time went on, they adapted, integrated, and became real participants in the social, economic, and political life of Medina. It was reported that Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas, who was a resident of Medina, offered to share his wealth with Abdu al-Rahman bin Awf, who was an immigrant from Mecca. The latter thanked Sa'd, prayed for him and asked him to direct him to the market.

34 Ghazali, pp. 194-195.

35 Abdu al-Rahman Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*. (New York: Devin Adair Co., 1964), p. 23.

36 Martin Ling, *Muhammad: His life Based on the Earliest Sources* (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983), p. 125. For more information and the full text of the covenant of Medina, see Muhammad Hamidullah on: *The First Written Constitution in the World* (Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad. Ashraf, 1975), pp. 41-54.

Abd al-Rahman bin A'waf began to trade in the market and within a short time, he profited from his trade and got married. Eventually, Abd al-Rahman bin A'waf became one of the richest companions and a great supporter of the Prophet.

Muhammad and his followers struggled to establish an Islamic state in Medina by laying the foundation and spreading the faith of Islam. This state became a model for subsequent generations. Through Muhammad's efforts, and the dedication of his followers, Islam became the religion of the people of Medina and most of them embraced Islam before he died in 632 C. E. Medina at the time was a commercial center of trade for the Jews and a caravan route to Syria. It remains a peaceful city and center of Islam to this day. It was there that Muhammad died and a big mosque was built around his grave. Many Muslims from all over the world make pilgrimage to Medina every year during the Hajj. Visiting Medina is not part of the Islamic requirements for performing pilgrimage even though nowadays the majority of Muslims think that they must visit Medina.

The Battles of the Prophet Muhammad: The Battle of Badr 623 C. E

Many of Muhammad's followers found it extremely difficult to adjust to the social and economic life of Medina during the first years after their arrival. They felt uncomfortable when they realized that trade was dominated by the Jews, and not by the Arabs, as was the case at Mecca. The weather was also not conducive for some. Many became sick and Muhammad prayed to God continuously for their survival. Since the majority of Muhammad's disciples immigrated to Medina secretly to escape the persecution of the *Quraysh*, they left all their properties behind; some even left their families behind. The *Quraysh*, who were at that time heartless about the plight of the Muslims, confiscated their properties thinking the disciples would never come back to Mecca. When the immigrants reached Medina, they had no way to support themselves financially. Consequently, they encountered great hardship. However, in the second year of *hijrah*, they decided to intercept the *Quraysh's* caravan, which was returning from Syria with a lot of goods with the hope that such approach would force the *Quraysh*

to release their confiscated properties. Muslims claimed that God had given permission to Muhammad to fight back against the people of Mecca, who had subjected them to severe hardship and treated them unfairly.

Permission is given to those who fight because they have been wronged. Those who have been driven away from their homes without right only because they said: 'Allah is our Lord.' (*Qur'an* 22: 40-41).

Muhammad left Medina with a few followers and went to a place called *Badr*, southwest of Medina, to intercept the caravan of the *Quraysh*. Luckily for the *Quraysh*, the caravan escaped and Abu Sufyan, the head of the caravan, reached Mecca safely with all the goods. When Abu Sufyan told the Meccans what Muhammad and his followers had attempted to do, they were filled with anger and considered Muhammad's attempt a big threat to their trade. They gathered and mobilized themselves to fight Muhammad and his group in order to secure their trade route to Syria. However, Abu Sufyan discouraged them not to fight Muhammad, since their caravan of goods was safe. They did not heed his advice. They marched to *Badr* to stop the Muslims and the potential threat they represented. The Meccan troop marched to *Badr* with more than one thousand men, several horses and camels. Their wives stood behind them singing and motivating them to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their tribe. The Muslims, for their part, were not well prepared for the battle, neither were they equipped with necessary weapons. The Muslim troop was composed of 313 men, two horses and a number of camels. However, they had no choice but to face the reality of war, for which they were ill prepared.

Muhammad gathered his people, admonished them and encouraged them to fight the *Quraysh* with all their strength. Such a religious war was labeled in Islamic history as "holy war-*jihad*." Eventually, both parties met at the valley of *Badr*, which was about 120 kilometers from Medina. To the surprise of the *Quraysh* and the people of Medina, the Muslims defeated the *Quraysh* despite their small number and the inferiority of their weapons. The Muslim's victory was attributed to their discipline, high morale, the divine leadership of Muhammad and support from Allah. They claimed that God sent angels to fight along

with the Muslims in this battle. There are some verses relating to this event in the *Qur'an*.

Remember thy Lord inspired the angels (with the message): 'I am with you, give firmness to the believers; I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers.... This is because they contended against God and His apostle.' If any contend against God and His Apostle, God is strict in punishment. (*Qur'an* 8:12-13).

God had helped you at Badr, when ye were a contemptible little force; then fear God; thus may ye show your gratitude. Remember thou saidst to the faithful: 'is it not enough for you that God should help you with three thousand angels (specially) sent down?' 'Yea, if ye remain firm, and act aright, even if the enemy should rush here on you in hot haste, Your Lord would help you with five thousand angels making a terrific onslaught.' (*Qur'an* 3:123-125)³⁷

The Muslims captured seventy men from the *Quraysh* and held them as prisoners of war. They were taken to Medina and given a chance to ransom themselves. Those whose family could not afford payment for their ransom were requested to teach Muslims how to read and write. The prisoners were not killed, as was the custom in Arabia; they were treated fairly and in a humane way. Such kind treatment encouraged some of them to convert to Islam. Those who were ransomed went back to Mecca unharmed.

37 There are some modernists Muslims who believe that the quoted verses should be interpreted metaphorically. That is, these verses should not be interpreted literally to assume that the angels physically descended from heaven and physically participated in the war. Rather, it should mean that God gave the Muslims moral motivation so as to withstand the ferocity of the war as if the angels were fighting with them. Of course, orthodox Muslims believe very strongly that the angels physically descended to earth to support the Muslims against the non-believers from Mecca. They argue that since the story is mentioned in the *Qur'an*, it should be believed as it is, for God is capable of supporting the believers in whatever ways He wants, and there should be no limit on His power.

The victory of the Muslims over the *Quraysh* at Badr humiliated the people of Mecca, because Abu Sufyan (who led their caravan) had discouraged them not to fight Muhammad. Nevertheless, the victory boasted the glory of Islam in Medina and its suburb, especially among the Arab Bedouins. It also lent credibility to the idea that Muhammad was a true messenger from God; otherwise, he would not have won. Interestingly, too, this victory enabled the Muslims to have unshakable confidence that God would always support them against their enemies. Muslims learned many lessons from the war, among which was the fact that being a Muslim involves continuous struggle and that the enemies of Islam would go to any extent to fight them. Some Muslims lost some of their family members in this battle too. They recognized that if Islam were to survive at that time, the believers had to protect it and sacrifice for it.

The Battle of Uhud in 625 C. E

Although the Muslims bitterly defeated the *Quraysh* at Badr, the survivors of the war returned to Mecca and vowed not to accept such humiliation. They regrouped themselves within one year and marched to Medina in large numbers. They pleaded for the chance to fight Muhammad and his followers and take revenge for what they suffered at Badr. This battle of *Uhud* took place on Mount *Uhud*, southeast of Medina in the third year after *hijrah* (625 C. E). One thousand Muslim men left Medina to meet the *Quraysh* at Uhud. Unexpectedly, three hundred of them retracted back and only seven hundred remained with the Prophet to defend the city of Medina. The non-Muslims - the Jews, Christians, and the Bedouin Arabs - with whom Muhammad had made a treaty to defend the city of Medina against any external enemy, did not come to the support of the Muslims. The *Quraysh* came with an army of more than three thousand men, huge weapons, and many horses. With enthusiasm, the Muslims won at the beginning of the battle and thus relaxed to collect the booty of the war. But they were brutally defeated at the end, because they left the strategic positions that the Prophet had assigned to them. Each Muslim army was warned not to desert their positions until ordered to do so. Those positions were taken

over by the *Quraysh* army, who launched severe attacks on Muslims and killed about seventy Muslims within a few days. The Prophet himself received severe injuries. Muhammad's uncle, Hamzah, was brutally killed and mutilated by Jahsh, a black slave whose master had promised him freedom if he could kill Hamzah.

However, due to Muhammad's courage and leadership, he was able to save the remaining Muslim army. The *Quraysh* killed many Muslims and then retired to glorify their victory. They announced that Muhammad had been killed. Such announcement demoralized the spirits of the Muslim soldiers, who did not know exactly what had happened to their Prophet. The *Quraysh* army returned to Mecca rejoicing and singing their triumph over the Muslims. Of course, the struggle between the Muslims and the *Quraysh* did not end there. The *Quraysh* vowed to come back when they learned that Muhammad did not die. The Muslims, for their part, vowed that such a defeat would never happen again. Both parties began to plan for the future battle. It was a struggle between good and evil, between belief and non-belief.

As in the battles of *Badr* and *Uhud*, the *Quraysh* troops were the ones that came to Medina to fight the Muslims and disturb their peace. The Muslims had no choice but to defend themselves, their faith, and their city from external assault and internal dissension. Muslim historians attribute the causes of the Muslim's defeat at *Uhud* to the following reasons:

- a) The hypocrites of Medina (*Munafiqun*) withdrew three hundred military men from Muhammad's troop at the last minute before the battle began. They argued that they did not know why they should fight beside the Muslims or for a religion whose future was bleak.
- b) The disobedience of the companions to Muhammad's order not to leave the top of Mount *Uhud* at any time, whether they won or not, until they were instructed by Muhammad to do so.
- c) Misjudgment of the Muslims who left their positions when they saw the victory of their brothers in the early stage of the war. They joined others in gathering the spoils of the war; they thought the war was over.
- d) The spread of the rumors that Muhammad had died. Such news demoralized the Muslims and weakened their enthusiasm. At the

same time, the rumors gave the *Quraysh's* troop a chance to attack the Muslims, since they too thought their leader, Muhammad, had been assassinated.

After the war at *Uhud*, Muslims returned to Medina in degradation. The Jews and the people of Medina taunted them. Muhammad expected that the Jews and the Bedouin Arabs with whom they had signed a treaty would come to their assistance, but nobody came out to support them; rather, they ridiculed them. However, with perseverance and dedication, Muhammad and his followers were able to regain their honor and glory by concentrating on building the Muslim community at Medina. They put the defeat at *Uhud* behind them and began a new life. Muhammad considered what happened at *Uhud* to be a test from God to distinguish between true believers, who were ready to defend the message of Islam, and non-true believers, who could not be relied upon. God says:

God will not leave the believers in the state in which ye are now until He separates what is evil from what is good. Nor will He disclose to you the secrets of the unseen. (*Qur'an* 3:179)

Muhammad pardoned the families of those martyrs at *Uhud* and encouraged Muslims to support them financially and morally.

The Battle of the Trench (*Ghazwat al-Ahzab*)

The *Quraysh* troop returned to Mecca from the battle of *Uhud* rejoicing at their victory over the Muslims. They thanked their deities, which, in their view, had assisted in removing the stain of the defeat at *Badr* a year before. They regained and reestablished their reputations and power among the neighboring Arabs. However, they regretted that they did not uproot the Muslims at *Uhud*. Immediately after they learned that Muhammad was still alive, they planned to attack Muslims at Medina again. They fulfilled their plan in 627 C. E. at the Battle of the Trench (*Ghazwat al-Ahzab*). At Mecca, they grouped together more than ten thousand military men from different tribes and clans and marched to Medina. They sought the support of their allies from many Arab tribes and some Jewish communities who regarded Islam as

a threat to their leadership and commerce because Islam forbade taking interest on loans. The Bedouin Arabs joined the *Quraysh* alleging that Muhammad had divided the Arabs into different groups. They all rallied together to retaliate against Muhammad and his followers. They vowed to end the threat of Islam to their existence and determined never to be defeated again.

The mobilizing of all Arabs against Muhammad instilled a great fear in Muslims. The *Quraysh* were not only determined to kill Muhammad, but to defeat the Muslims once and for all. Nevertheless, the Muslims made all the preparations needed for the war, and equipped themselves with whatever weapons they had. Before the Meccan troops arrived, one of Muhammad's companions, Salman al-Farisi, a Persian convert, advised Muslims to dig a large trench around Medina to prevent the *Quraysh's* assault from crossing over. The Muslims worked hard to dig the trench and the plot worked perfectly, although the task was long and tiresome. It was a real defense for the Muslims.

Eventually, the *Quraysh* troop arrived at Medina in 627 C. E; they were astonished when they saw what the Muslims had done. They had no experience of such war tactics before; they stood powerless and hopeless before the trench. However, with their ten thousand men, they camped at *Aqiq* near Medina and waited for two weeks, hoping that the Muslims would come out to fight them or surrender; they did not surrender. Neither group made any real progress. Of course, the Muslims were totally terrified and panicked during the siege. They begged for the support of the Jewish community at Medina, who ultimately disappointed them by making plans to attack the Muslims from within. The *Qur'an* has captured the fear of the Muslims and described it thus:

When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and ye were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah. There were the believers sorely tried, and shaken with a mighty shock. And when the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease were saying: God and His messenger promised us naught but delusion. And when a party of them said: O folk of *Yathrib!* There is no stand (possible) for

you, therefore turn back. And certain of them (even) sought permission of the Prophet, saying: Our homes lie open (to the enemy). And they lay not open. They but wished to flee. (*Qur'an* 33: 10-13).

When the Muslims realized that the Jews were ready to attack them, they offered them one third of their date fruit trees at Medina; the Jews rejected that offer and insisted on breaching the treaty. They felt very strongly that the Muslims would definitely be defeated by the *Quraysh*.

After a long siege, there was a heavy storm one night which uprooted the tents and the camps of the *Quraysh*. The weather was very bad and extremely cold; the storm left nothing untouched.³⁸ The *Quraysh* felt the grip of hardship upon them. As a result, Abu Sufyan, the military leader of the *Quraysh*, retreated and left Medina with his troop. Their return relieved the Muslims of their panic. They considered the *Quraysh's* withdrawal a victory and a great blessing from God. The prestige of the Meccans waned due to their failure to accomplish their tasks at Medina. Muslims were elated at their victory; they had lost neither life nor property.

This battle also revealed the nature of relationship between Muslims and Jews in Medina. When the Muslims were under siege, they anticipated support from the Jews against the external enemy, as stipulated in the treaty of Medina that they signed with Muhammad. But instead, the Jews supported the Meccans and breached their treaty. Eventually, after the Battle of the Trench, Muhammad regrouped his troops and marched against the Jews, particularly the clan of Qurayzah. After a long siege, the Jews surrendered. The men were punished, while their wives and children were put to hard labor, as was the custom at that time. They were punished because their support for the Meccan troops was considered treason. Both Muslims and Jews had signed an agreement that they would both defend Medina against any external enemy. With the retreat of the *Quraysh* and the defeat of the Jews at their Medina stronghold, the Muslims became the majority at Medina. Muhammad eventually regrouped his followers and established himself as the leader of Medina without any challenge.

38 Al-Ghazali, p. 329.

The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah in 628 C. E.

When the Muslims settled down after the Battle of the Trench (*Al-Ahzab*), Muhammad decided to make a lesser pilgrimage to Mecca. He said that God had ordered him to visit Mecca. Muhammad's companions, many of who were immigrants and longing for their homeland, were overwhelmed with joy. Muhammad emphasized to his followers that he did not intend to make war against the *Quraysh* at Mecca, but to make a pilgrimage to the (*Ka'aba*), the sacred house. He was convinced that he and his followers had the right to make pilgrimage to Mecca like any other Arabs, especially during the sacred months. He encouraged his companions to prepare for the sacred journey. Many did prepare, while a few did not for fear that the *Quraysh* would fight the Muslims, and they would be killed or never return to Medina.

Those of the wandering Arabs who were left behind will tell thee: Our possessions and our households occupied us, so ask forgiveness for us. They speak with their tongues that which are not in their hearts. Say: Who can avail you aught against Allah, if he intends you hurt or intend you profit? Nay, but Allah is ever aware of what ye do. Nay, but ye deemed that the messenger and the believers would never return to their own folk, and that was made fair-seeming in your hearts, and ye did think an evil thought, and ye were worthless folk. (*Qur'an* 48: 11-12)

In 628 C. E., Muhammad and his followers left Medina to visit Mecca. When news of their visit reached Mecca, the *Quraysh* suspected their motives and vowed not to let them perform lesser pilgrimage (*Umrah*). Muhammad sent his envoys to the *Quraysh* leaders to convince them of their good intention of performing lesser pilgrimage (*Umrah*) and making sacrifice for the house. The *Quraysh* distrusted Muhammad and prevented him and his followers from entering Mecca. Eventually, the Muslims camped at a place called *al-Hudaibiyyah*, a small town near Mecca. There, the *Quraysh* sent their ambassadors, one after another, to verify the real objective of Muhammad. All their ambassadors informed their leaders that the Muslims came to perform

lesser pilgrimage (*Umrah*). Yet, *Quraysh* leaders became suspect of their own ambassadors and thought that they had been won over by Muhammad's rhetoric and magic.

In return, Muhammad sent his own ambassadors to the *Quraysh*. When these ambassadors did not return back on time, the Muslims suspected that they might have been killed or detained by the *Quraysh*. At last, Muhammad sent Uthman bin Affan (who later became the third Caliph), whom the *Quraysh* knew and respected. Uthman was detained for a long time and it was rumored that the *Quraysh* had killed him. Thus, Muhammad sought the advice of his companions on what to do; they decided to fight back. They reasoned that the ambassadors should not be harmed or tortured. The companions made a covenant with Muhammad that they would defend Islam and protect their brothers from any killing and humiliation. That covenant was known as the "allegiance of pleasure (*Bay'at al-Ridwan*)."¹ As stated in the *Qur'an*, their allegiance to support Muhammad was truly an allegiance to supporting Allah:

Lo: those who swear allegiance unto thee (Muhammad), swear allegiance only unto God. The hand of God is above their hands. So, whosoever breaketh his oath breaketh it only to his soul's hurt; while whoso ever keepeth his covenant with God, on him will He bestow immense reward. (*Qur'an* 48:10)

God was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto thee beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their heart, and He sent down peace of reassurance on them, and hath rewarded them with a near victory. (*Qur'an* 48:18)

Fortunately, after the conclusion of this covenant and before engaging in any combat with the *Quraysh*, Uthman returned. He told Muhammad that the *Quraysh* were ready for peace-talks and Muhammad agreed. The negotiator from the *Quraysh* was Suhayl bin Amr and from the Muslims, Muhammad. The secretary was Ali bin Abi Talib, the cousin of the Prophet. Both parties unanimously agreed

and signed a peace-treaty after a lengthy discussion. The peace-treaty states that:

- a) The Muslims should postpone performing a lesser pilgrimage (*Umrab*) that very year, but they might come the following season if they wanted. They should only come for *Umrab* and would be allowed to stay for three days. They would bear no arms, save the arms of the travelers, with swords in sheaths.
- b) Both parties would stop making war against one another for ten years.
- c) Any person who converted to Islam in Mecca without the permission of his guardian or his tribe should be returned to Mecca. And any Muslim who reverted from Islam would not be sent back to the Muslims or to Medina, because he reverted back to the religion of his tribe.
- d) Any clan or tribe who wanted to take the *Quraysh* as an ally was free to do so; and any tribe or clan who wanted to enter into bond with the Muslims as its ally, was free to do so.³⁹

The contents of the treaty angered some of the Muslims, especially Umar bin al-Khattab, who angrily asked Muhammad why the Muslims should return Muslim converts to Mecca if they came to them, while the *Quraysh* would not return a Muslim who rejected Islam. Muhammad convinced Umar and many other companions of the wisdom of the treaty, not least of which was the recognition of the Muslims as legitimate partners in a peaceful treaty.

One of the interesting stories during the drafting of the treaty of Hudaibiyyah was that in the beginning, the Prophet dictated that the treaty was between him, as the Prophet of Islam, and the *Quraysh*. Suhayl, the *Quraysh*'s ambassador, objected to that statement by saying that if the *Quraysh* had recognized Muhammad as the prophet, there would be no treaty between them. Thus, Muhammad asked Ali to write that the treaty was between Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, and the people of *Quraysh*. Ali was angry, yet he wrote what Muhammad dictated to him. Eventually, both parties endorsed it without mentioning that Muhammad was the Prophet of God.

Despite this, Muslim scholars argue that the treaty gave recognition to the existence of the Muslims as a separate community, who had an

equal right to exist like the *Quraysh*. It enabled the Muslims to re-establish themselves at Medina without fear that the *Quraysh* would come to fight them unexpectedly. It also gave freedom to other tribes and small clans to choose Muslims as their ally. Subsequently, the treaty of Hudaibiyyah proved the acumen of Muhammad in negotiation. It was a big victory for Islam in general. For the first time, the freedom to preach Islam to whomever Muhammad wanted was endorsed by a formal treaty.⁴⁰ The *Quraysh* were satisfied with the contents of the treaty and their leaders endorsed it. Unfortunately, the Muslims returned to Medina without visiting the *Ka'aba* as they had planned to do. They did not perform the lesser pilgrimage (*umrah*) that year.

Muhammad Invited Leaders of the World to Islam

When Muhammad returned to Medina, he used that period of tranquility to send letters to Arab chiefs, kings of the Roman Empire, emperors of Persia, and many other leaders of his time. He invited them to embrace Islam. Some of his emissaries were well received, while others were ignored or brutally murdered.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Muhammad disregarded their negative responses and continued to spread Islam to whomever he could. Occasionally, he fought those who stood in his way of spreading the religion of Islam. Many times he won and occasionally he lost.

The Conquest of Mecca (*Fathu Mecca*)

The peace treaty between the *Quraysh* and Muhammad, which was concluded in Hudaibiyyah, did not last long. Within a year, each party suspected the other of breaching the treaty. The Muslims accused the *Quraysh* of transgression by helping, with weapons, the tribe of Bakr (a confederate of the *Quraysh*) in November 629 C.E. against the tribe of Khuza'ah, an ally of the Muslims. The *Quraysh* killed a number of the tribe of Khuza'ah. Muhammad considered such assistance a breach of the treaty and prepared to fight the *Quraysh* on their homeland, Mecca, for the first time. He requested his followers to equip themselves and

39 Ghazali, pp. 354-356; Haykal, pp. 340-359.

40 Abdur Rahman 'Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad* (New York: Devin Adair Co., 1964), p. 26.

41 Haykal, pp. 364-366, 374-378.

encouraged all capable Muslims to join him. He did not specify the time or mention the *Quraysh* as his target. The *Quraysh* were not aware that Muhammad was coming to Mecca to fight them.

In the month of *Ramadan*, January 630 C. E., Muhammad reached Mecca with his troops, which had been joined by other troops on the way. Their numbers were estimated at 10,000 men. They camped near Mecca and met with some leaders of the *Quraysh*, especially Abu Sufyan and Al-Abbas. The *Quraysh* recognized their inability to conquer the Muslim troop at that time because they had not prepared for war. Therefore, they designed a strategy through which the encounter with the Muslim army would be bloodless. They negotiated with Muhammad and asked him not to attack. He agreed and promised not to kill anyone unless the Meccans killed the Muslims first. He also requested that the *Quraysh* surrender peacefully. Muhammad reiterated that his visit was not to revenge or persecute them, but to free Mecca and its people from the worship of many idols, which had failed them, and to relieve them from the oppression of the Meccan oligarchy.

Powerlessly, the *Quraysh* surrendered peacefully and Muhammad did not humiliate them. Rather, he assured them that he who entered Abu Sufyan's house or the *Ka'aba*, would be safe; he who stayed in his home would be safe too. When the people of Mecca did this, the Prophet kept his promise. He did not force anybody to accept Islam. He forbade any of his military commanders to kill anyone. The *Quraysh* were astonished that Muhammad did not retaliate against them despite their atrocities and uncompromising enmity against him and his followers for more than twenty years.

Muhammad entered the house of God (*Ka'aba*), thanked Allah for His blessings and victory, and asked his followers to perform *Tawaf*, the ritual of greeting the house by running around it seven times. He then summoned the *Quraysh* and said: "What do you think I would do for you?" They responded, "You are a generous brother and a son of a generous brother." He offered them general amnesty and set them free. He did not confiscate their properties; he did not allow anyone to be taken as prisoner of war; and he did not humiliate them. The *Quraysh* were shocked at his kindness. Later, he went inside the *Ka'aba* and demolished all the idols therein. Those idols could not save themselves

or their worshippers, he argued. They were all hewed down while Muhammad kept saying: "Say the truth has come, and falsehood has vanished, and verily falsehood is certain to vanish." (*Qur'an* 17:81). The destruction of those idols was a blow to the *Quraysh*. It signified the destruction of their gods and the end of their relationship to their ancestors. They had not expected Muhammad to do that to their gods but they had no choice. It was, perhaps, a new beginning and a big victory for the Muslims. Those Muslims who left Mecca before were able to go back to their houses. Muhammad insisted that those who had lost their property at Mecca should let it go and begin a new life rather than request restitution from the *Quraysh*. The Muslims heeded his advice and began their lives anew.

Despite the overwhelming joy and happiness that the *Quraysh* felt at being set free and for Muhammad's forgiveness, which they did not expect, they were totally disturbed and embarrassed watching the Muslims obliterate their deities and idols, which they and their forefathers had cherished so much. Nevertheless, the tolerance and accommodation shown by Muhammad and his followers towards their fellow people of Mecca, who had persecuted them, brought about the submission of the people of Mecca to Islam. No one was coerced to embrace Islam; nobody was taken as a slave; no property was destroyed. However, some people at Mecca remained unyielding to Islam and later joined the people of Ta'if to combat Muhammad again. Additionally, it was reported that Muhammad ordered some of the notorious enemies of Islam at Mecca to be punished for their atrocities against the Muslims in the past.⁴² With the conquest of Mecca, many Arabs surrendered to the leadership of Muhammad and people began to embrace Islam in large numbers.

After the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad engaged in a few other combats with other Arab tribes, especially the Hawazin, the Thai in Hunayn, and the Ta'if. Those people could not tolerate the downfall of the *Quraysh* and the fall of the city of Mecca, which was seen as the center of trade. Muhammad won his battles against them and thus established the political and religious leadership of the Muslims over the Arabs in the peninsula. Muslims believe that Muhammad's fighting, especially against the *Quraysh*, was to defend Islam and Muslims, and

42 N. Tawheed, *A Glance at the Life of the Holy Prophet of Islam*, (n.d., p. 98, quoting Kamil, vol. 2, pp.247-250.

to suppress the aggression of non-believers against Islam and Muslims. The expeditions of the Muslims were not carried out with the motive of exploitation, oppression, or revenge. Their wars were not waged for imperialistic motives. They were to defend the honor of Muslims, spread Islam and spread justice on earth.

Back to Medina

After the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad returned to Medina and turned inwardly to reform his community and build the moral foundation upon which subsequent generations of the Muslim community would rely. Eventually, many Arabs and tribal leaders sent delegations to Medina to meet and pledge their allegiance to him after they had heard about his victory over the *Quraysh* at Mecca. Muhammad received them well, respected them, and, in most cases, sent teachers to educate those who converted to Islam. Some of the delegations who visited Muhammad at Medina were Christians from Najran. Muhammad received them at his mosque and allowed them to stay at the mosque and say their prayers there. This shows his tolerance of other religions and his recognition of other traditions.

Muhammad's Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca in 631 C. E.

In 631 C. E., Muhammad and his followers fulfilled the fifth pillar of Islam by performing pilgrimage at Mecca. He called upon all capable Muslims to join him in that historical and spiritual journey, called the **Farewell Pilgrimage** (*Hijatul Wada'i*). It was the only pilgrimage that Muhammad performed. Thousands of Muslims joined him on that journey. At Mecca, he showed his disciples, by example, how pilgrimage should be undertaken. In his farewell speech at mount *Arafah*, he laid down the worldviews of Islam and admonished Muslims to take their religion seriously by practicing whatever he taught them and obeying the *Qur'an*, the book of God, which he brought to them. He affirmed that God had perfected Islam for all human beings. In his farewell speech, he began by glorifying God and then said:

O human beings, listen well to my words, for I do not know whether I shall meet you again on such an

occasion in the future. O human beings, your lives and your property shall be inviolate until you meet your Lord. The safety of your lives and of your property shall be as inviolate as this holy day and holy month. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. Thus, do I warn you? Whoever of you is keeping a trust of someone else shall return that trust to its rightful owner. All interest obligations shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer inequity. God has judged that there shall be no interest. ... O human beings, to you a right belongs with respect to your women and to your women a right with respect to you. It is your right that they not fraternize with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to commit adultery. But if they do, then God has permitted you to isolate them within their homes and to chastise them without cruelty. But if they abide by your right, then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers. Remember that you have taken them as your wives and enjoyed them only under God's trust and with His permission. Reason well, therefore, O human beings and ponder my words which I now convey to you. I am leaving you with the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet. If you follow them, you will never go astray. O human being, take my words seriously. Learn that every Muslim is a brother or sister to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood or sisterhood. Nothing shall be legitimate to a Muslim, which belongs to a fellow Muslim unless it was given freely and willingly. Do not, therefore, do injustice to your own selves. O God, have I conveyed Your message? They all answered, yes. Then he said: God, be my witness.⁴³

43 Haykal, pp. 486-487.

After this farewell speech, he completed the pilgrimage rituals at Arafah, Muzdalifah, Mina and Mecca. He taught his disciples all they needed to know about Islamic pilgrimage and its importance. After the pilgrimage, he returned to Medina. After a few months, he got sick and died of fever in 632 C. E. at the age of sixty-three, as many of his biographers have asserted. It was reported that he died of a poison put in his food by a Jewish lady, but that story was not authentic. Whether he ate poison or not, he would have died anyway. His death was a shock to many of the newly converted Bedouins to Islam because they thought that if he was truly a prophet of God, he should not die. They forgot that he was a human being like them. However, others anticipated his death, especially those who attended his farewell speech at Arafah during the pilgrimage. With his death, the revelation from God came to an end; Islam embarked on its second evolution and important historical phase, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Some Important Events at Medina

Muhammad spent thirteen years at Mecca and called the *Quraysh* to believe in Islam. When they rejected his message, he and his followers immigrated to Medina where he spent the last ten years of his life. It was at Medina that Islam was finally established and took its shape. Beyond what has been said above about Muhammad's struggle with the *Quraysh*, there were many other essential historical events that occurred at Medina, which left their mark on Islam that can be seen even until today.

It was at Medina that the rules and regulations governing the pillars of Islam were introduced. These are the laws about daily prayers, fasting, giving support to the poor, *Zakat*, and the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a Muslim's life. The basics of these five pillars were mentioned in the *Qur'an*, but it was Muhammad who interpreted them to Muslims at Medina and showed them through his actions and words how to implement them. It was at Medina, too, that the ethical and social laws of Islam were introduced and applied. Whenever there was an issue, Muslims would resort to the Prophet, who in turn would wait for a revelation for solution. If he received a revelation, he would tell his

companions. If he did not receive a revelation on an issue, he would make his own judgments. These judgments and pronouncements of Muhammad, which were not revelation, were compiled together and constitute what the Muslims call today *Sunnah* (the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad). If his judgment was not totally accurate, he would receive revelations from God to put him right, as had happened with regard to the distribution of the spoils of war at Badr in the second year of *Hijrah*, 624 C. E.

Further, when Muhammad first reached Medina, he offered daily prayers facing Jerusalem. The Jews thought that Islam was merely an extension of Judaism. But the Jews were unhappy when Muhammad changed his direction by facing the *Ka'aba* at Mecca as ordered by God in the *Qur'an*.

We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to the heavens; now shall We turn thee to a direction (*Qiblat*) that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the sacred mosque (*Ka'aba*); wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction. The people of the Book know well that that is the truth from their Lord, nor is God unmindful of what they do. (*Qur'an* 2:144)

The Jews bitterly rejected Muhammad and his message, despite the fact that Muhammad's secretary in Medina, at that time, was a Jew.⁴⁴ They even plotted to kill him, as Muslim biographers have asserted.⁴⁵ They realized that Islam is a distinctive religion, although it claims the same origin as Judaism and Christianity, in that all three religions are monotheistic in nature and related in one way or another to the Prophet Abraham. Due to this change of direction, the relationship between Muslims and Jews became strained. Confrontations between the groups ensued. Eventually, Muslims fought the Jews and exiled them to *Khaybar* when they could not live together peacefully anymore. From that time on, the social and political relationship between the religions was not cordial, as expected. Perhaps both Muslims and Jews are often enemies, but occasionally they accommodate one another as happened in Spain, Morocco and Turkey. Of course, Islam recognizes

⁴⁴ Haykal, p. 281.

⁴⁵ Haykal, pp. 277-281.

Judaism as a legitimate religion, but Judaism does not recognize Islam as a religion, despite many similarities between them. Even today, the Jews and Muslims in Palestine are at each other's throats. Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, there has been no peace among the Jews and Arab Muslims. The Arab Jews and Christians are vindicated under Jewish rule despite the fact that the Jews had fared very well under Muslim rule in Spain, Turkey and Baghdad.

Muhammad's Marriage to Many Wives

As mentioned in Chapter One, Muhammad married his first wife Khadijah at Mecca. He was then twenty-five years old and Khadijah was forty. They lived with one another for twenty-five years and had a happy married life. They were blessed with six children, four girls and two boys. Muhammad did not marry any other wife until after the death of Khadijah in 619 C. E. By then, he was fifty years old. If Muhammad wanted to marry many wives at that time, nothing would have prevented him from doing so, particularly when polygamous marriage was encouraged in the community. However, he was satisfied with Khadijah until she died. He always remembered her kindness and generosity. Between 622–631 C. E., he married other wives for political and religious purposes. All his wives were widows except A'ishah, his youngest wife, who was also the daughter of his best friend, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, who became his successor.

However, two of these marriages generated a hot debate among Muslims of his time and of today. Those were his marriages to A'ishah at the age of nine or eleven, and to Zainab, who was considered a wife of his adopted son, Zayd bin Harithah. The controversial issue of his marriage with Zaynab is mentioned in the *Qur'an* 33:37.⁴⁶ His marriage to A'ishah was an arranged marriage. It was, and still is, an acceptable custom in Arabia. However, wherever there is an arranged marriage, there is to be no sexual relationship between the husband and the wife until she reaches the age of puberty, which differs from one country to another and from one culture to another. Therefore, readers should not assume that Prophet Muhammad began to have a relationship with A'ishah at the age of nine or eleven. It is also acceptable in Arab culture

for an old man to marry a young lady or an old woman to marry a young man, as in the case of Khadijah and Muhammad.

Primarily, the purpose of marriage is procreation. Less emphasis is laid on romance, as practiced in many cultures today. Nevertheless, Muhammad's marriage to A'ishah was intended to cement his relationship with his friend Abu Bakr, A'ishah's father, who had supported Muhammad since the beginning of Islam in Mecca. Also, Islam allows polygamous marriage when there is a need for it on the condition that the husband treats his wives with justice and fairness to the best of his ability. Thus, Muhammad's marriage to A'ishah was seen as part of a common practice among the Arabs. The *Qur'an* does not condemn polygamy; it regulates it. Muhammad's marriage with A'ishah is not an example of molestation, as many uninformed readers may think. In many Muslim countries today, governments make laws against marriage between an adult and a minor. Additionally, arranged marriages are not limited to marriages with minors. Adults also practice arranged marriages in Africa, Arabia, India and Pakistan.

Furthermore, Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab was a special case in Islam. He did not marry Zaynab because of her appearance to him one day romantically when her husband was not at home, as claimed by some modern writers on Islam. This was permitted by God to condemn the Arab's custom of prohibiting marriage from an adopted family. The rules that govern adoption are different in Islam. So when Muhammad married Zaynab, the Arabs accused him of violating a well established Arab custom, which considered an adopted person a relative that must be treated as a biological son or daughter, and be given the name of the person who adopted him or her. But the *Qur'an* states that an adopted person is not a biological son or daughter. He or she should be called by his or her biological parent's names. Also, a marriage to an adopted daughter is allowed, because they are not blood relatives. And since Muhammad and Zaynab were not related by blood, their marriage was acceptable.

Tension Between Muslims and Jews at Medina

Muhammad introduced himself to the Jews the first year he arrived at Medina. In fact, Jews were among those who first received him on

46 Readers should read this story in the *Qur'an* to get the full picture.

his arrival there, and he tried to establish a cordial relationship. Thus, he concluded a treaty whereby he recognized the Jews and they, too, recognized him as the leader of the Muslims. The treaty stipulated that both parties are inhabitants of Medina and that they will join hand in hand to defend the city of Medina if attacked by any external enemy, particularly the *Quraysh* from Mecca. Muslims and Jews enjoyed a peaceful coexistence during Muhammad's early years at Medina, but after the battle of *Uhud* and the Battle of the Trench (*Ahzab*), their relationship strained due to the support which the Jews gave to *Quraysh* during its siege against the Muslims. When the siege was going on, Muhammad fervently sought moral support from the Jews and begged them to withdraw their support for the *Quraysh*. Muhammad promised to give them one third of the Muslims' date tree farms if they would honor the treaty between them and the Muslims. The Jews refused. Muslims were terribly disturbed and overwhelmed with fear about the attitudes of the Jews, as is mentioned in the *Qur'an*.⁴⁷

Behold, they came on you from above and from below you, and behold, the eyes became dim and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about God. In that situation where the believers tried: they were shaken as by a tremendous shaking. (*Qur'an* 33:10-11)

Eventually, the Battle of the Trench (*ahzab*) ended when the *Quraysh* withdrew their army and went back to Mecca without any fighting between them and the Muslims. After the battle, Muhammad turned to the Jews, specifically Bani Qurayzah, accusing them of breaching the treaty. He requested they leave Medina since they were not ready to live peacefully with Muslims. Hence, the Jews left Medina. Before they left, they destroyed their homes and properties so that Muslims would not inherit or benefit from them as stated in the *Qur'an* 59:2. Henceforth, the relationship between Muslims and Jews remains strained until today, particularly between the Arabs and Jews in Israel. One wonders why both Judaism and Islam claim they stem from the same source, yet their adherents cannot live together peacefully.

Muhammad's Teaching at Medina

Nevertheless, as Muslims started settling down at Medina, Muhammad began to teach his followers about Islam and the relationship of Muslims to one another and to other members of society. He defined the rights and duties of men and women, and the rights and duties of each individual towards God. He elaborated extensively on the moral values upon which Muslims should conduct their lives and emphasized the mutual cooperation needed by all men and women to live a peaceful life. This cooperation, he pleaded, should be based on helping, loving, and sympathizing with one another in order to build a viable Islamic community where everybody sees him/herself as equal before God and as a servant of God. Each person is responsible for promoting moral values. Muhammad taught his followers to do good deeds and refrain from all evil acts. He stressed the importance of faith and action in Islam. The purpose of human existence on earth, Muhammad added, is to serve and worship God and to help other human beings. He also advised his followers on legal issues and how they should resolve their conflicts. He introduced a few basic laws which they should live by and apply in their daily lives. He himself set examples on how people should adjudicate among themselves.

The Death of Muhammad and the Question of Succession

After Muhammad had laid down the foundations of Islam and received the complete revelation from God, he died at Medina following a short illness on June 8, 632 C. E. at the age of sixty-three. His death caused great confusion and tension among the believers. Some people, including Umar, the second Caliph, argued that if Muhammad was a real prophet, he would not die. Thus, Umar initially told the people that Muhammad did not die and that he would come back. Other companions like Abu Bakr, Muhammad's great friend and father-in-law, accepted the reality that Muhammad was a human being and not a divine person; hence, he did die like any other human beings. Abu Bakr declared to those who were mourning Muhammad's death that it is only God who is eternal. He said,

47 Muhammad al-Ghazali, pp.318-320.

O human beings, if you have been worshipping Muhammad, then know that Muhammad is dead. But if you have been worshipping God, then know that God is living and never dies.⁴⁸

Abu Bakr thus recited this verse in the *Qur'an* to prove that Muhammad was a messenger and that he would definitely die like any other human being.

Muhammad is no more than an Apostle: many were the Apostles that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will ye then turn back on your heels? If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to God; but God (on the other hand) will swiftly reward those who (serve him) with gratitude. (*Qur'an* 3:144).

With Muhammad's death, the revelations ceased. Of course, he was buried at Medina. Since then the city of Medina has attracted millions of Muslim pilgrims from all over the world. However, there surfaced a great problem of succession immediately after Muhammad's death. The Muslim group, which was later labeled as the Sunni, insisted that the Prophet did not name a successor. A minority group, later known as Shiites, insisted that he had named Ali bin Abi Talib, his son-in-law, as his successor. Both groups cited various reports (*hadith*) from Muslim traditional sources to support their views. There are a number of books today written by both groups on the subject of succession. The issue of succession was the first problem to divide Muslims into various sects. Since the death of Muhammad, Muslims have not been one community (*ummah*), which Muhammad wanted them to be. Of course, Muslims are not alone in this predicament. Many religious prophets did not name successors before their deaths. Gautama Buddha did not name a successor, neither did Abraham and Jesus. Why all these prophets fail to name, appoint or select their successors is a mystery. Perhaps they did not know when they would die. Many Shiites today argue that the Prophet would not leave the issue of succession as important as it is without addressing it. Therefore, they believe very strongly that Muhammad had

appointed Ali bin Abi Talib as his successor. The Sunnis disagree. Thus, there are two major sects in Islam today: the Sunnis and the Shiites.

Summary:

The emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, which is known as *hijrah*, marks the beginning of the establishment of an Islamic state and Islamic calendar. When Muhammad reached Medina in 622 C. E., he built a mosque, a house of God, where Muslims met for daily prayers and for other social activities. He also united the warring Arabs, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, who finally laid down their swords after a hundred years of fighting. Muhammad's ability and diplomacy to unite those Arabs had won him a respectful place among the people. His leadership enabled him to convince all groups at Medina to sign a treaty, which guaranteed a peaceful co-existence for every group. Gradually, he and his followers, who were called the immigrants (*muhajirun*), settled down at Medina and participated in the social and political life of the city. Within a short time, Islam won many converts and Medina became an Islamic city, where Muhammad was declared the religious and political leader for Muslims and non-Muslims. After a short period of tranquility, the *Quraysh* began to threaten the existence and popularity of the Muslims. They came to Medina several times to fight Muhammad and his followers. At times, Muslims won the battles, and on seldom occasions, the *Quraysh* won.

In 630 C. E., Muhammad united his troop(s) and lay siege on Mecca, the *Quraysh* stronghold and the center of their commerce. They were unaware of his coming. Thus, they surrendered peacefully. Muhammad freed the city of Mecca from the worship of the idols and put an end to the pagan worship. Muhammad gave complete amnesty to his opponents. Some of them eventually converted to Islam, while a few others retained their old religion. In 631 C. E., Muhammad visited Mecca with thousands of Muslims and performed the rite of pilgrimage (*hajj*). During the pilgrimage, he declared that the message of Islam had been completed, and that God had chosen Islam as a peaceful and perfect religion for all human beings.

48 Haykal, pp. 506-507.

This day I have perfected your religion for you, I have completed My favor upon you, and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (*Qur'an* 5: 4).

Muhammad went back to Medina after the pilgrimage and became very sick. He died after a few months, leaving behind him no property or wealth, and no heir except his daughter, Fatimah. He also named no successor. By his death, Muslims believe that the religion of Islam has been completed and that God will not send any new messenger to human beings since the truth has been spoken and spread by Muhammad, the last messenger of God and the seal of all the prophets (*khatam al-Nabiyyin*).

Muslims perceive Muhammad as a Prophet, a person of a high character, and an exemplar of good conduct not only for the Muslims but also for all humanity. He is seen as a kind father, a loving husband, a compassionate friend and a generous person to all people. He was believed to be merciful to all humanity. He cared for all who had contact with him. He was known as a trustworthy person (*al-Amin*), and his ability to forgive others was unparalleled in human history as evidenced by his forgiveness for the people of Mecca, and for Jahsh, who killed his uncle Hamzah at the battle of Uhud. He received a revelation (*Qur'an*) from God. It was sent down gradually during the twenty-three years of his prophethood. He taught his followers the meanings of his message and how its injunctions should be applied in the daily lives of the Muslims. He spent thirteen years at Mecca preparing and educating his disciples about Islam and spent another ten years at Medina, where he established an Islamic state. Muslims claim that Muhammad was the only prophet who preached a new religion, nurtured it and became the head of that religious group before he died. His followers spread Islam after him to all corners of the world. And today, Islam is the second largest religion in the world and continues to win more converts even in the U.S. and Europe due to its simplicity, sensibility and appeal to human reasoning.

Suggested Readings

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Chapter III

Islam and the Caliphs: The Successors of Muhammad

Introduction

One of the questions that surfaced immediately after the death of Muhammad was whether or not he had appointed a successor. Muslim Sunnis unanimously agree that the Prophet Muhammad did *not* appoint a successor before he died reasoning that he wanted the Muslims to select whomever they wanted based on a mutual agreement among them (*shura*). Imam al-Suyyuti, in his work *Tarikh al-Khulafa* quotes both Umar bin al-Khattab and Ali bin Abi Talib to have said that the Prophet did not specifically name a successor. Al-Suyyuti narrates that when Umar bin al-Khattab was stabbed and before he died, he was asked to appoint a successor. Umar replied that if he appointed anyone, he had a precedent in Abu Bakr's appointment; if he did not appoint anyone, he had a precedent in the Prophet Muhammad. According to Umar, the Prophet named no successor at all.⁴⁹

There are a few specific narratives and reports that Sunni scholars cite to substantiate the claim that Muhammad wanted Abu Bakr to be his successor, although he did not express this verbally. For instance, it was reported that when Muhammad was sick, he asked Abu Bakr to lead the Muslims in daily prayers.⁵⁰ The Sunnis consider this to be

indirect permission for Abu Bakr to lead the Muslim community after his death.

The Shiites, on the other hand, insisted that the Prophet *did* appoint Ali bin Abi Talib to be his successor and that he had alluded to that selection on several occasions both in Medina and during the Prophet's pilgrimage to Mecca at a place called *Ghadir al-Kumm*. Shiites claimed that Abu Bakr and other companions robbed Ali of his legitimate position. They alleged that had Ali been appointed, the Muslim community would not face the problems it faced in the beginning. Whether Abu Bakr or Ali was the legitimate successor is not an issue that can be settled in this brief work. However, this dispute over leadership after the death of Muhammad divided Muslims all over the world into two major groups, even to today. Each group claims to have concrete evidence to support its claim. The two groups are Sunnis and Shiites. Sunnis represent about 85-87% of the world's Muslim population, while Shiites represent about 12-15%.

Immediately after the death of Muhammad and before his burial, his followers became confused. Some close friends and leaders met at different places to discuss selecting a successor. Each tribe wanted its member to be Muhammad's successor. The *Ansar*, the helpers of the Muslims at Medina, wanted one of them to be leader. Immigrants from Mecca, the *Muhajirun* from Quraysh, wanted somebody from Mecca to be leader. And within the Quraysh tribe itself, some Muslims presented Ali bin Abi Talib as leader, while others preferred Abu Bakr. At last, those who met in the courtyard of *Bani Sa'idah* selected Abu Bakr as Muhammad's successor. Many companions, championed by Umar bin al-Khattab, endorsed this selection, while a few leading companions such as Ali bin Abi Talib and Abdullah bin Zubayr did not support the election of Abu Bakr in the beginning. Abu Bakr was selected because he was a close friend of Muhammad's even before the latter received revelation from God. He accompanied Muhammad during his migration to Medina; he was the right-hand man and chief advisor to Muhammad on political issues. In addition, he was Muhammad's father-in-law.

Unfortunately, Abu Bakr did not live long. He ruled for two years and three and half months. During this time, however, he put to rest the rebellion of the apostates (*Murtaddun*), a group of Muslims who

49 Abd al-Rahman bin Abi Bakr al-Suyyuti, *Tarikh al-Khulafa* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Sa'adat, 1952), p. 7.

50 Suyyuti, p. 63.

denounced his authority and denied payment of *Zakat*, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. Abu Bakr fought them vigorously, arguing that the five pillars of Islam should be adhered to. He asserted that believing in some of them and rejecting others constitutes rejection of all and that such a rejection is tantamount to denying Islam itself. Yet, a question still arises as to whether it is legitimate to fight someone who utters the declaration of faith "*Lailaha illa Labu, Muhammadun vasulu Labi* - there is no god but God and Muhammad is His messenger" and then denounces it. Abu Bakr fought the war of apostasy emphatically and brought all those Bedouins who denied Islam or refused to pay *Zakat* after the death of Muhammad back to the fold of Islam. The unification of the Muslim community under one leadership is considered Abu Bakr's greatest achievement.

The Reign of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq from 632-634 C. E.

Abu Bakr, whose full name was Abdullah bin Uthman bin Abi Quhafah, was the first caliph in Islam. He was nicknamed *Siddiq*, the truthful, because of his unconditional trust in Prophet Muhammad. He always believed whatever Muhammad said. He was born in Mecca around 573 C. E., and grew up with Muhammad. He was a successful merchant and a close friend of Muhammad's before and after the latter became the Prophet. Abu Bakr was the first adult to accept Islam after Khadijah, the wife of the Prophet. Henceforth, he devoted his energy, wealth, and attention to promoting and inviting people to Islam. His financial support for Muhammad and Islam in its early days was unparalleled in Islamic history. He assisted the Muslim community in Mecca by emancipating several Muslim slaves, paying for their freedom himself. His support for the poor and the outcast was remarkable. He accompanied Muhammad in his historical migration to Medina, as mentioned in the *Qur'an*. He supported and stood beside him in all the battles that he fought against non-believers. Abu Bakr was known as a pious person and a devote follower of Muhammad, who adhered strictly to his tradition. He also functioned as an advisor to Muhammad. He was also known for his acumen and an unparalleled ability for solving problems, as well as his knowledge of Arab genealogy - *al-ansab*. When Muhammad died, nearly everyone was confused;

they thought Muhammad would not die if he were a true prophet. Abu Bakr stood up and with courage announced that Muhammad had died, and would never come back again. "O men, if you worship Muhammad, Muhammad is dead; if you worship *Allah*, *Allah* is alive," declared Abu Bakr. With this moving speech, the Muslims regained a sense of reality about the death of Muhammad, whom they thought would always be with them.

Subsequently, Abu Bakr was selected to be the successor to Muhammad (*Khalifah al-Rasul*). Upon his election, he ascended the pulpit of the Prophet and made his historical first speech whereby he set forth his philosophy of governance and his responsibilities to the community. In that speech, he said with all frankness and humility:

O people, I have been selected over you and I am not the best of you. If I perform any good deeds, assist me (lend me your support). If I make a mistake, correct me. Do not let the blame of any accuser prevent you from telling the truth and putting me right in the cause of *Allah*. Certainly, no people would abandon the struggle in the cause of *Allah* (*Jihad*) except that they would be humiliated. There is no nation in which adultery and mischief is spread except they would be inflicted with tribulation and tragedy. Verily, a weak person among you is a strong person before me until I help and enable him to get his due rights. A strong person among you is a weak person before me until I take the rights of others from him voluntarily or by force. O people, obey me as long as I obey *Allah* (in whatever I ask you to do). When I disobey *Allah*, I have no right over you to be followed.⁵¹

It was with these principles that Abu Bakr began his leadership, affirming to the Muslim community that he was not better than they and that he was there to establish Islam and serve the people. When he was selected, to the surprise of many who thought he was too mild a man, Abu Bakr successfully faced the surmountable problems he encountered. He proved himself to be the great leader that the Muslims

51 Suyyuti, p. 69.

expected. He wasted no time in uniting Muslims and fighting all those who challenged Islam, which was claimed by Muslims to be a universal message. He surrounded himself with able advisors and led them to success by putting Islam onto the map of the world.

Major Achievements of the Caliph Abu Bakr

Although Abu Bakr's reign lasted only two years and a few months, his accomplishments within that short period were remarkable; they left an everlasting impact on the history of Islam. Some of his achievements include putting an end to the rebellion of the Arab Bedouins, who took the opportunity of Muhammad's death to undermine Islam and Muslims by rejecting Islam completely and encouraging others to do so as well. This was known as the war of apostasy (*harb al-Riddah*). The apostates were those who failed to surrender to the teachings of Islam after the death of Muhammad. Some of these people used to pay their tax dues (*Zakat*) to the Prophet, but failed to pay it to Abu Bakr. They claimed that it was Muhammad who was using it. Some of the companions of the Prophet were ambivalent as to whether those people should be fought or not. However, Abu Bakr insisted that Islam is a complete system of life and that its five pillars should be accepted as a whole system or be rejected totally. If someone denied any one of the five pillars, he had denied all pillars, for Islam should not be fragmented. Abu Bakr was able to convince the other companions of his holistic understanding of Islam. Henceforth, those who denied or rejected any pillar of Islam were challenged and many of them finally surrendered to the supremacy of Islam and became practical Muslims. Abu Bakr insisted that the *Zakat* money was used to assist the poor and develop the community.

Abu Bakr also fought against the false prophets who declared themselves the messengers of God after the death of Muhammad and encouraged their tribes to reject Islam. Those false prophets included Aswad 'Ansi, who emerged from the tribe of Tamim, and Musaylama al-Kadhab, who came from central Arabia. They were all challenged and defeated by Abu Bakr's armies within a year of his reign. Abu Bakr was determined to unite the Arabs under the banner of Islam, and he did.

Abu Bakr also sent Muslim armies to subdue the rebellion of the people of Bahrain in Northeast Arabia. The Bahrain people had been under Persian control before the advent of Islam. The Persians maltreated and oppressed them. Some of them accepted Islam when Muhammad was alive, but reverted to their previous ways after his death. Abu Bakr brought them back to the fold of Islam.

After Abu Bakr had put an end to the internal rebellions of the Arabs, he sent Muslim missionaries to Persia and Syria to spread Islam. As a result, Muslims engaged in wars with Persian leaders who strongly opposed the spread of Islam. The Muslim armies, despite their small number and poor military equipment, defeated the Persian and Syrian armies. With such an unexpected victory, Muslims were motivated and began to win more converts within the Persian and Byzantine empires. Critics of Islam have argued that Abu Bakr's conquest of Arabia was accomplished by force. Since there is no compulsion in Islam, they saw no justification in fighting those who did not believe in Islam. Muslims' response was that those people were fought because they prevented the spread of Islam in their locale and that those who did not interfere with the spread of Islam were left alone to practice their religions as long as they paid taxes for the Islamic state for the protection that the Muslims offered and guaranteed them.

It should be noted too that Abu Bakr ordered the collection and compilation of the *Qur'an* when Umar bin al-Khattab advised him to do so. Umar feared that the rapid death of those who memorized the *Qur'an* by heart (the *Huffaz*) might lead to the loss of the *Qur'an* if it was not preserved in writing. The whole *Qur'an* was collected through a committee appointed by Abu Bakr and headed by Zayd bin Thabit, Muhammad's secretary. After its compilation, Abu Bakr kept a copy with Hafsa, one of the Prophet's wives, until it was duplicated in the time of Uthman and distributed to many districts. With the compilation of the *Qur'an*, the Muslim sacred text was prevented from loss, distortion and corruption so that we have it today.

Abu Bakr's reign was full of achievement. He united the Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula and lessened the threat of foreign oppression against Muslim land and territories. Abu Bakr was renowned for many qualities, among which were:

- a) he was nicknamed al- Siddiq, a truthful person, who strongly believed in Muhammad;
- b) he was with the Prophet on *Mount Thaur* at Mecca where both were hiding;
- c) he was the companion of the Prophet on his historical emigration (*Hijrah*) to Medina;
- d) he was the one whom the Prophet appointed to lead the prayers for the Muslims when Muhammad was sick; and
- e) he was the most intimate friend of Muhammad from his youth until his death.

After two years and three months of tremendous service to Islam, Abu Bakr died in Medina at the age of 63 after a short illness. Before his death, he appointed a committee to select a successor. He recommended Umar bin al-Khattab to be the caliph, arguing that he was the best choice for the problems that were facing the Muslims at that time, but he did not insist on this appointment. Eventually, Umar was selected by the election committee and became the second caliph. With the death of Abu Bakr, Islam entered a new phase in its history.

The Second Caliph: Umar bin al-Khattab (634-644 C. E.)

Umar bin al-Khattab, known as *al-Faruq*, succeeded Abu Bakr in 634 C. E. and assumed the title of "Commander of the Faithful" (*amir al-Muminin*). He was born in Mecca in 588 C. E. and was known to be brave and very aggressive. He was a trader - literate and well-respected among the Quraysh, who appointed him as one of their ambassadors to other tribes, particularly during wartime. He had been one of the antagonists of Islam before he converted to it.. Muslim biographers report that Umar converted to Islam unexpectedly when one day he decided to assassinate Muhammad. He was diverted from his plot when Sa'd bin Waqqas informed him that Umar's sister, Fatimah, had become a Muslim. The story has it that Umar visited his sister and found her and her husband reciting the *Qur'an*. He was furious. He hit her until she started bleeding. When Umar recovered from his anger, he inquired why and what led his sister to believe in Muhammad and

his message. Her sister did not answer but rather read a portion of the *Qur'an* to Umar. He was moved by it. He went to Muhammad that day and declared his faith in Islam after a short conversation. His conversion was a turning point in the religion..

Muhammad rejoiced greatly at Umar's conversion because through him many people embraced Islam. From the beginning of his conversion, Umar publicized his Islam and threatened those who would prevent him from practicing his new faith in public. Umar wholeheartedly supported Islam, propagated it, and defended it with whatever he could. He stood with Muhammad and fought with him during most of his battles against the Quraysh. When the persecution of the Muslims reached its extreme and Muslims began to migrate to Abyssinia, then secretly to Medina, Umar was one of those people who announced publicly that he would be migrating. He challenged anyone among the Quraysh to prevent him; nobody obstructed him. He left Mecca unhindered until he reached Medina with the small group that followed him. At Medina, he became Muhammad's advisor and great supporter. It was reported that some of his opinions were supported by revelations from the *Qur'an*. When Muhammad died, however, Umar was unable to accept such a tragedy. He persuaded people not to accept Muhammad's death of Muhammad as fact until Abu Bakr finally convinced him to accept the reality that Muhammad was a human being, and thus he must die like any other human being.

After Muhammad was buried, Umar was quick to endorse the selection of Abu Bakr as a successor to Muhammad. Umar became the right-hand man for Abu Bakr in running the affairs of the Islamic state. He supported the collection of the *Qur'an* in a book and its distribution. When Abu Bakr was about to die, he selected an electoral committee to choose a successor. However, he himself suggested the appointment of Umar. The committee met, deliberated and unanimously selected Umar to be the next caliph.

The Reign of Umar bin al-Khattab

Umar ruled the Islamic world from 634-644 C. E. During that period, he reestablished Islam and gave it new direction. He laid down the policies that Muslims should follow as he understood them from the

Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. And whenever the original sources of Islam, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, were silent on any novel issues, Umar sought the opinion of his advisory committee to reach a general policy and then made those decisions public for discussion and approval. If the public endorsed the decisions, he would implement them; otherwise, he suspended them, as happened when he wanted to enforce the payment of a specific amount as dowry in Islamic marriage. A woman in the audience stood up against Umar and said that he had no right to specify what *Allah* did not specify. He listened to her and suspended his judgment. He also sent Muslim missionaries around the world to propagate Islam and fought vigorously against those who prevented its spread. It was during his reign that Muslim armies brought the whole of Arabia under the domain of Islam; he also conquered the Persian and the Byzantine empires within two decades.

The victory of Islam and Muslims in their conquest of the two major world powers of that time might be due to the following various reasons:

- a) unresolved divisions among the Christians, especially on doctrinal issues, such as the issue of the trinity and what and what not to include in the Bible;
- b) internal conflicts among the Persians, especially those fighting for the throne;
- c) the heavy taxes which both Roman and Persian governments levied on their subjects;
- d) the simplicity of the religion of Islam as compared to Christianity in terms of doctrine;
- e) the revolutionary administration of the Muslims at that time, which often retained the leaders of the conquered in their positions, if they became Muslims;
- f) freedom of religion that Muslims offered to the people living in their conquered territories;
- g) the military skills of the Muslims, despite the fact that they emerged from Arabia; and

- h) the protection Muslims gave to non-Muslims within Islamic territories.

While Muslims considered Umar to have been driven by the love of God and commitment to Islam, non-Muslim critics saw him as motivated by fear of failure, someone who treated his subjects with an iron-hand. Such criticism was unrealistic and not accepted by Muslims, for Umar was one of the Muslim leaders who would acknowledge his mistakes in public and retract his opinions whenever he was proven wrong, as he did when he wanted to fix the entitlement of women in dowry. As stated above, a woman had objected to his plan and called his attention to a verse in the *Qur'an*, which does not limit dowry. Umar accepted her argument and did not limit the dowry despite the fact that many companions of the Prophet were in favor of it. In fact, when he first became the caliph, some Muslims were scared and anticipated that he would be too harsh on them. Umar recognized their fear and thus addressed them saying:

Brothers, it has come to my attention that people fear me. They saw that when the Prophet was alive, Umar was harsh. During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Umar was hard and stern. Now that he has become caliph himself, God knows how hard he will be. Whoever has said this was not wrong ... Now that the whole responsibility has come to me, you will feel a change in me. ... For those who practice tyranny and deprive others of their rights, I will be harsh and stern, but for those who follow the law, and are devoted to the religion of Islam, I will be soft and tender.⁵²

Despite what has been said about Umar, he created a system of government and consolidated the conquered Roman and Byzantine empires into a state governed by Islam which was based on justice, equality, and fairness. He created the institution of *Shura* (consultation committee) whereby the affairs of state were discussed and opinions of the Muslim community sought before any major policies were endorsed and executed. Men and women felt free to voice their opinions and

52 Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud from Tradition to Terror* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), p. 30.

opposition. Individual opinions were recognized and respected. In addition, Umar divided the Islamic state into provinces to facilitate its rule and established a very strong administration. He created a system of stipends for the military and regulated it according to the priority of conversion and services. He also established a judiciary system whereby he entrusted judicial functions to the learned companions like Ali bin Abi Talib. He built prisons both in Mecca and Medina for offenders and paid pensions from the Islamic treasury (*bait al-mal*) to the family of the bereft, the disabled and the poor. Finally, he introduced a public treasury and revenue administration department to help build the Muslim community. Among the revenue sources he introduced were:

- a) Kharaj (land tax);
- b) Ushr (special land tax);
- c) Jizya (indemnity or defense tax for the protection of the Dhimmis, the non-Muslim minority who lived among the Muslims) - taxes on non-Muslim traders and merchants.

Booty Tax (income from conquered territories)

Umar was the one who insisted that Muslims should have their own calendar. Thus, he inaugurated the Islamic calendar, which began with the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, known as *Hijrah*. He also maintained regular Muslim armies (a national army force) who were paid by the government; their families also received some allowances, especially when husbands were away. His skills and ability to lead enabled him to win the support of his followers and many of his foes.

Ultimately, Umar's period of leadership was full of accomplishments and advancement for Islam and Muslims. Islam became a world religion that flourished wherever it went. Umar himself became a role model for subsequent Muslim leaders; his time was perceived as the golden age of Islam. It was not free of problems, however, internally or externally. He was sometimes perceived as overzealous and harsh against the weak. He also had great love and respect for the people of the Book: the Jews and the Christians. When he conquered Jerusalem, he refused to destroy anything there. He retained the churches there and instructed his governor in Jerusalem to give permission to the Jews

to worship frequently at the synagogues long closed by the Christians. The Wailing Wall, which Christian leaders had prevented the Jews from using more than once in a year, was also opened. When Umar went to Jerusalem to accept the city's surrender to the Muslims, he wore coarse Arab dress and many did not realize that he was the caliph of the Muslims.

In Jerusalem, he was offered a place to pray in the sacred church, but he refused, thinking that Muslims might try to take the church and turn it into a mosque. He chose instead to pray at a spot associated with David, King of Israel. He later founded the mosque of Umar on that spot, near the dome of the rock, where Muslims claim that the stone identified with Muhammad's ascent to heaven in the night journey is sheltered (*Isra' and Miraj*), as stated in chapters 17 and 53 of the *Qur'an*. While in Jerusalem, Umar made a treaty between he and other religious groups and affirmed that all men are equal before *Allah*, and that leaders have no special privileges over others. Umar continued to spread Islam throughout Syria and in many other places. He never forced it upon anyone, but insisted that Muslims should not be stopped from spreading their faith. He also proclaimed that those who stood in the way would be challenged.

However, a grieved slave named Abu Lu 'lu' Firoz from Persia assassinated Umar in Medina in 644 C. E. Firöz was a slave of Mughirah bin Shu'bah. He had complained to Umar that his master overburdened him with taxes and harsh labor. He felt Umar did not do enough to help him, so he stabbed Umar while he was leading a congregational prayer. Umar died a few days later in 644 C. E.

Before Umar died from the stabbing, he commissioned an electoral committee of six companions to choose his successor. He himself did not lay emphasis on any person, as Abu Bakr had done. When he was asked why he did not name a particular successor, he replied that he had a choice and precedent. "If I chose for you, I had Abu Bakr as my precedent; if I did not, I had the Prophet Muhammad as my precedent." The electoral committee, which consisted of prominent companions Ali, Zubayr, Uthman, Talhah, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas, and Abd al-Rahman bin Awf, met several times, deliberated, and unanimously agreed to select Uthman bin Affan as successor to Umar. Many companions joyfully gave an oath of allegiance to Uthman.

However, a few leading companions such as Ali bin Abi Talib did not endorse Uthman's leadership in the beginning, claiming that he was a soft-hearted person and unqualified. Nevertheless, Uthman spent more years as caliph than had his predecessors. Umar's reign was full of accomplishment, as well as some tragedy and turmoil. Umar left behind a legacy of good governance and great leadership and consolidated the Islamic community (*Ummah*). He treated his subjects as equals and judged among them with fairness. Thus, he was nicknamed Umar, the Just (*al-Adil*).

Uthman bin Affan: the Third Caliph (644-656 C. E.)

Uthman, the third caliph in Islam, was born in Taif near Mecca in 573 or 577 C. E. to a wealthy father who was a merchant. He grew up in Mecca and joined his father's profession as a trader. Uthman was a softhearted, open-minded, and kind person with great compassion for the poor. When Muhammad proclaimed prophethood, Uthman's friend Abu Bakr invited him to Islam, and Uthman did convert. As a result, his tribe and family deserted him, and he was forced to immigrate to Abyssinia in Africa with other Muslims in 616 C. E. He stayed there for a short time and returned to Mecca to face the boycott of Quraysh for Muhammad and Bani Hashim. When the persecution against the Muslims became unbearable, he traveled to Medina where he resided until he was killed in 656 C. E. He continued practicing his trade in Medina and became very rich. He fervently supported Muhammad and financed some Muslims' expeditions and economic projects. Although he did not participate in all battles, as did Abu Bakr or Umar, he fought alongside the Prophet Muhammad in many places, except at Badr. He was a brave man.

Uthman was the third caliph in Islam. He reigned between 644-656 C. E. Immediately after his election, he made drastic changes in how things were run. He terminated some governors who Umar had appointed and selected new ones, and rearranged the treasury. The changes he made caused some turmoil in Medina, which would not be resolved until his death. During this time, Islam expanded to the East and to the West. Muslim armies conquered some Roman and Persian territories. His record was full of accomplishments as well as mishaps.

Uthman was credited with unifying Muslims to recognize and adopt one source of revelation by encouraging them to accept the copy of the *Qur'an* as the only authorized canon. Ultimately, he caused division among Muslims and chaos (*Fitnah*) for succeeding generations.

While many Muslims praised Uthman for his dedication and selfless service to Islam through his wealth and piety, others criticized him for his weak governance, especially during the second half of his reign, which led to his merciless assassination and mutilation by rebels from Egypt. Even though the people of Medina gave him all the protection they could, they were unable to save him from such a tragic ending. Despite all criticism against him, Sunni Muslims believe that Uthman had been promised paradise by Prophet Muhammad, whose love and reverence for Uthman were unparalleled. In fact, Uthman married two of Muhammad's daughters. Because of the double marriages, he was nicknamed *Dhu-Nurayn* (a person of two lights). He was a close friend of Muhammad and Abu Bakr, as well, and an advisor to them when they were alive.

Uthman was one of the richest companions of the Prophet. He supported Islam and Muslims with his wealth, especially during times of crisis. After the death of Muhammad, he assisted both Abu Bakr and Umar in the governance of the Islamic state and won the respect of the Muslim community. Upon assuming the caliphate, he first paid the *diyyah* (the blood money) for those victims whom Ubayd Allah, the son of Umar bin al-Khattab, had killed in revenge for his father. Uthman was criticized for not applying capital punishment on Ubayd Allah (who took the law into his own hands). Uthman argued that it was improper to kill Umar's son when Umar himself had just been assassinated. And since the victim's families agreed to accept the blood money (*diyyah*), Uthman deemed it fit to pay them from his own money rather than from the public treasury. Many other companions supported his judgment, and agreed with how he handled the case.

After this incident, Uthman faced a number of insurmountable crises that surfaced in the Muslim world, among which were the attempts of the Roman, Byzantine, and Persian empires to regain the lands that Umar had conquered. Uthman stood fast and sent military expeditions, one after another, until he put an end to the external threats, and even won more territories for Islam. Consequently, the

Islamic states expanded rapidly and the booties and taxes from the conquered territories were sent to Uthman at Medina, who in turn distributed them accordingly.

Just as Uthman was credited for the rapid expansion of Islam, he was strongly criticized for nepotism for appointing his relatives to important leadership positions, especially from Banu Umayyayh, at the expense of qualified Muslims not from his tribe. He removed some previous governors elected by Umar and replaced them with his relatives so as to have unity of governance and administration. However, as time went on, some of those governors became corrupt and rejected Uthman's authority. They began to exercise unchecked, unlimited authority and hence the Islamic states began to fall apart internally. Numerous complaints of laxity were charged against Uthman's governors and administrators, and he did little to correct or remove them from office. He was suspected of secretly planning for the Umayyad tribe to be the leaders of the Muslims in the future. Whether that suspicion was true or not, the events of history have shown that the Umayyad tribe became the rulers of the Muslim world for more than one hundred years after the last caliph, Ali bin Abi Talib, was killed in 661 C. E. by an Umayyad emissary.

The reign of Uthman can be evenly divided into two phases: phase one was from 644-650 C. E., which is considered a "golden age"; and phase two from 650-656 C. E., which is characterized as a period of turbulence and crisis, internally and externally.⁵³

Internally, Uthman made copies of the *Qur'an* and sent a copy to each province. He ordered all other private and individual copies to be burned so as to maintain one edition of the *Qur'an*, a deed of great service to Islam and Muslims throughout the ages. Although Uthman's intention in unifying Muslims by using one copy of the *Qur'an* was encouraged by many companions of the Prophet, a few others opposed such attempts and accused Uthman of having done something illegal, something Abu Bakr and Umar had not dared to do.

In addition, those who opposed Uthman's governance and that of his administration rallied around one another and marched to Medina to overthrow him. After a long siege, Uthman was assassinated in June 656 C. E. His family buried his remains secretly at night. Uthman

did not allow the Muslims in Medina to adequately defend him or his house when the rebels came from Egypt, Syria, and Kufah. He asked his protectors to leave him alone. With his death, Islamic leadership became fragmented, and the Muslim world was torn into pieces due to tribal and fractional disputes. We must acknowledge that Uthman was a human being like his predecessors. He did many good things and like all humans, had shortcomings. At times, he did well; at times, he made mistakes. Making mistakes is inevitable for a leader in Uthman's position. But under his rule and leadership, Islam spread to the island of Cyprus, Libya and eastward to Afghanistan and Western India. Uthman, like Umar, did not name a successor despite the fact that he knew that rebels were coming to assassinate him. Neither did he appoint an electoral committee to select a new leader. Thus, he left the Muslim community in a state of leaderless chaos. Uthman's legend lies in canonizing the *Qur'an* and making it a unified code for all Muslims. Thus, the *Qur'an* is known as "*mashaf Uthman*" (Uthman's treatise). Of course, Uthman was not the author. The *Qur'an* was a revelation from God to Muhammad to guide humanity to the right path.

Alil bin Abi Talib: the Fourth Caliph (655-661 C. E.)

Ali bin Abi Talib was the fourth caliph in Islam. He was born in Mecca around 600 C. E. and was a cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad. Ali was brought up by Muhammad and was claimed to be the first youth to believe in Islam. Some sources even affirm that he was the second believer after Khadijah, the Prophet's first wife, when he was just ten years old. Without doubt, Ali was aware of the implications of what it meant to be a believer. He grew up in Muhammad's household and embraced Islam wholeheartedly, defended it, and died for it.

Ali participated in the spread of Islam. He was always ready to sacrifice his life for Muhammad, as he did during Muhammad's emigration to Medina when he was asked to sleep in Muhammad's bed, despite the possibility that he might be wrongly killed instead of Muhammad. Ali understood the gravity of what he was doing, yet he put his life in danger to defend Muhammad. Muhammad loved him so much that he married his daughter, Fatimah, to Ali. She was the only daughter who outlived Muhammad. Ali attended all battles

53 See *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 615-617.

with Muhammad, except the battle of Tabuk, when he was designated by Muhammad to be the governor of Medina and be in charge of the Muslims and Muhammad's family. Ali was known for his extraordinary knowledge of Islam, his unparalleled understanding of Islamic laws, the in-depth comprehension of the goals and aims of the *Shari'ah*, his eloquence in the Arabic language, his kindness to the poor, and his compassionate attitude toward all Muslims. In addition, Ali was considered one of the bravest Muslims in Islamic history. All these qualities were attributed to his kinship to the Prophet, who was said to have prayed to *Allah* to bless Ali. Muhammad had even promised Ali paradise in the next world.⁵⁴ Ali was recognized as the first Imam of the Shiites and the greatest leader and head of the Sufis in Islamic history.

When Muhammad was alive, Ali was his right-hand man after Abu Bakr. To strengthen that relationship, Muhammad allowed him to marry his daughter. After the death of the Prophet, all three caliphs relied heavily on Ali's support and judgment on various occasions. His advice was always sought. Although he thought he would be an immediate successor to Muhammad, when he was not elected, he eventually gave his full support to Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman. Umar bin al-Khattab even married one of his daughters. All three caliphs before him accorded him great respect for his knowledge and wisdom. Although Ali did not directly defend Uthman, his sons, Hasan and Hussein, were among those who defended Uthman when the rebels came from Egypt and Kufah to assassinate him.

The Reign of Ali bin Abi Talib as Caliph

Ali bin Abi Talib was the cousin of the Prophet. He grew up in Muhammad's household and was the first youth to accept Islam. As we've mentioned above, Muhammad loved him and trusted him so much that when Muhammad wanted to emigrate from Mecca to Medina, he appointed Ali to sleep on his bed. Despite this delicate delegation, Ali

54. Muhammad had promised many people that they would go to paradise (heaven). These people are labeled at times as "the ten who have been promised Paradise" (*al-asharah al-mubasharin bil Jannah*). The idea is that these people had done a great service to Islam. Consequently, God had forgiven them their mistakes and promised to let them go to heaven in the next world. For more details, see Tantawi's work.

did sleep on Muhammad's bed and luckily was not killed by the Quraysh who wanted to assassinate Muhammad. After Muhammad's departure from Mecca, Ali returned the trusts (*amanat*) that people had kept with Muhammad to their owners. Then he joined Muhammad in Medina. Ali fought side-by-side with Muhammad in all his battles except the battle of Tabuk. Eventually, he married Muhammad's daughter Fatimah and was blessed with twin babies, Hasan and Hussein. They were Prophet Muhammad's only grandchildren. Ali was a great leader in Islam, and very eloquent, as evidenced by his speeches. He was the most knowledgeable person among the companions of the Prophet about the lawful and the unlawful in Islam. Hence, he served as chief justice for both Abu Bakr and Umar during their reigns.

After Uthman's assassination, Ali reluctantly accepted the leadership of the Muslims. While many companions supported his selection, a few others such as Zubayr, Talhah, Zayd bin Thabit, Muhammad bin Maslamah and A'ishah, the wife of the Prophet, did not pledge allegiance to him. Since the majority endorsed his leadership, as they had for Abu Bakr and Umar, his selection was considered legitimate. Ali immediately faced a few major problems that demanded his immediate focus and attention. Among them were:

- a) to bring peace back to Medina and the Muslim world;
- b) to bring the assassins of Uthman to justice;
- c) to set right the political deterioration of the Islamic state. That is, to correct some of the damage that had been done before him; and
- d) to remove some of the corrupt leaders who claimed to have been appointed by Uthman.

Ali rose to these challenges but encountered insurmountable problems when dealing with them. His attempts to identify the real assassins were fruitless because they had returned to their original locations before the investigations began. As such, Ali could not punish anybody because he did not possess adequate evidence. On the other hand, most of the governors whom Uthman had appointed did not support Ali's leadership. They insisted that they would not surrender to his authority until he brought the assassins to justice, either by killing them or putting them in jail, as recommended by Islamic law. Ali requested that enough time be given to him to investigate, but his

request was denied. Consequently, there was no peace in Medina and in the Muslim world from the beginning of his leadership until his death in 661 C. E. Each governor did whatever he wanted without any regard to the central government in Medina. In Medina itself, opposition against Ali grew day-by-day under the pretext that they would not recognize his authority until he punished the killers of Uthman. Ali tried to get things under control, but he was unsuccessful. Rather, some companions such as Talhah, Zubayr, and a few others collaborated with A'ishat, Muhammad's wife, and challenged his authority and leadership. Ali bin Abi Talib had no choice but to use force against them on the battlefield of Ayn al-Jamal. It was the beginning of the end for Ali and his reign.

Local disputes in Medina went from bad to worse and from worse to completely miserable. As a result, Muslims, especially the companions of the Prophet, fought and killed one another. For the first time in Islamic history, Muslims fought themselves. Neither party was ready to surrender to the other; ironically, each group claimed to be on the right path and claimed that God was on its side. Was God with Ali, who was a cousin of Muhammad, or with A'ishat, who was the beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad? Only God Himself knew. The real causes of the war between these groups were obscured.

At the end of 656 C. E., Ali left Medina for Basrah to fight A'ishat's army. He was advised not to leave Medina. Even his son Hasan discouraged him from going, but he went anyway. He had miscalculated and misjudged the people of Basrah and Iraq. He left Medina at their request but they were the first to desert him and divide. He won the war against A'ishat and her group at first, which included Talhah and Zubayr. The army of Ali killed them both. He sent A'ishat to Medina and protected her. Alas, Ali himself never returned to Medina. He selected Kufah in Iraq as his capital instead of Medina because he thought he had many followers there and reasoned that Kufah was near Syria and hence he would know whatever plans that Mu'awiyah, his rival, was undertaking against him. Ali encountered problem after problem, though, especially from those who claimed to be his adamant followers and supporters, the *Kharijites*. They often disagreed with him. Whenever he addressed them on an issue, they would commend him verbally, but they were always reluctant to comply. They would

find fault with something or blame Ali for misjudgment. Ali's crime, it seems, was that he tended to tell the truth and was not a cunning politician like Mu'awiyah or Amr bin al-As, who were his rivals.

Between 657-658 C. E., Ali and Mu'awiyah's armies engaged in bloody combat over the leadership of the Muslims, whereby hundreds of Muslims were killed on both sides. In one of the stories, when Mu'awiyah was about to be defeated in one of the battles, he asked his army on the advice of Amr bin al-As, a companion of the Prophet, to tie the *Qur'an* to their swords and raise it up, indicating they were ready to cease fire and submit to the book of *Allah*. It was a war tactic, but Ali did not recognize it as such at the time. The war stopped and an arbitration committee was set up to reconcile them. Unfortunately, the arbitration failed because of the deception by Amr bin al-As, the spokesman for Mu'awiyah. Amr bin al-As agreed with Ali's spokesman, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, that they should both denounce their leaders so that the community would choose someone else who was qualified. Amr bin al-As asked Abu Musa al-Ash'ari to denounce Ali first and he did. Then Amr bin al-As stood up and announced that since Ali had been denounced by his spokesman, he affirmed Mu'awiyah as the leader of the Muslims. It was a pure betrayal of what they had agreed upon and hence the contention between the two groups continued.

Eventually, a small group from among Ali's followers deserted him, accusing him of consenting to the arbitrators. They argued that only God should be the judge and not human beings. This group was labeled later as the *khawarij* - the dissenters, for they condemned Ali, Mu'awiyah, Amr bin al-As, and anyone else who did not subscribe to their ideas on Islam. It was this group whose members met at Medina and planned secretly on their own to kill Ali, Mu'awiyah, and Amr bin al-As. Different people were assigned to kill each leader hoping that by doing so the Muslim community would attain peace by getting rid of these leaders. Abd al-Rahman bin Muljam was assigned to kill Ali. He stabbed Ali during the morning prayer (*fajr*) in Iraq, and Ali died a few days later. Bakr bin Abdullah, who was assigned to kill Mu'awiyah, stabbed Mu'awiyah, but he did not die because he was very fat and his followers were able to rescue him. Amr bin Bakr, who was assigned to kill Amr bin al-As, did not succeed because Amr bin al-As was sick and did not attend the morning prayer (*fajr*) as expected, and so escaped

the plot. These three evil persons wrongly thought that by assassinating the three leaders, the Muslim world would enjoy peace. What they did not recognize was that violence is never stopped by violence, as history has always shown, and as exemplified in modern history by the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. War never brings peace except in the minds of short-sighted tyrants and leaders.

With the brutal assassination of Ali bin Abi Talib in 661 C. E., his leadership over the Muslims came to an abrupt end. His loyal followers turned to his son Hasan bin Ali and elected him caliph. He accepted the honor after much pressure, but after a short time reached a compromise with Mu'awiyah and surrendered leadership of the Muslim world to Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, who led the Islamic world into the Umayyad Empire. Hasan bin Ali was the son of Fatimah, Muhammad's daughter. Hasan insisted that he did not want the leadership because he intended to save Muslim lives. He wanted Muslims to stop killing one another. After his surrender to Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, Hasan returned to Medina and stayed there without becoming involved in the politics of the Umayyad Empire until he died six months and a few days later. He was buried in Medina.

Mu'awiyah became Caliph and ruled his empire with an iron hand by brutally quieting his opponents through the use of force and threat. He appointed Marwan bin al-Hakam as the governor of Medina and removed all the governors appointed by Ali bin Abi Talib. He reigned for another twenty years after Ali. Mu'awiyah appointed his son Yazid bin Abihi to be his successor years before his death. From the Umayyad period forward, Islamic leadership became an inheritance, whereby a son or a relative of the Caliph, whether qualified or not, inherited the throne. This is still happening in many Muslim countries today, especially in the Arab world, such as in Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates, and Morocco. By doing so, they destroyed the elective rule established by the four Caliphs and brought monarchy into the Muslim world for the first time. What a tragedy!

The Caliphs as Perceived by the Muslims

Muslim Sunnis refer to the four Caliphs as *Khulafa ar-Rashidun*, which is often translated as "the righteously guided Caliphs." They

strongly believe that these caliphs were righteous persons whom God guided. History recorded for us that each one of them did what he thought was the best for Islam and sought God's assistance. It is asked, however, that if their deeds and works were accomplished through their own volition, then how could they be rightly guided and still commit some of the mistakes they did during the reigns of Uthman and Ali? Clearly some of the deeds of the two latter Caliphs cannot be considered righteous. They did make mistakes, and as we have said, this is human. Perhaps Muslims use these terms metaphorically to compare their periods to other kingdoms and leadership during that time. The Caliphs' periods were far better in terms of their commitment to spreading the message of Islam, the expansion of Islamic territories, the conquering of the Byzantine and the Persian empires, and the establishment of a moral life for the community. Nevertheless, Muslims emulate them in what they did right and fervently ask God to forgive them in what they did wrong. The Caliphs received the message from the Prophet Muhammad, interpreted it, and applied it to their own situations with many modifications. Likewise, Muslims today should have the freedom to apply the laws to their own situations as they deem fit.

As to the issue of whether or not the Prophet named a successor, Sunni Muslims strongly argue that Muhammad did not name a particular successor. Rather, he indicated through his action by asking Abu Bakr to lead the prayer for the Muslims when he was sick. Muhammad did not want anybody else to lead the prayers. By analogy, Muslims reasoned that if Abu Bakr could lead them in prayer, he could also lead them in political affairs. Thus he was selected to become the first caliph in Islam. Fortunately, Abu Bakr stood to the challenges he faced and courageously brought the Muslims back to unity. He expanded the territory of Islam to include some areas not conquered by Muhammad before his death. Nearly all Muslims, including Ali bin Abi Talib, who found no problem with Abu Bakr and Umar's leadership, recognized his leadership. Actually, he worked laboriously for them both and served as one of the judges during their reigns. He was the right-hand man for both.

On the other hand, the Shiites emphatically argue that the Prophet named Ali, his cousin, as his successor. They cite the Prophet's

announcements at *Ghadir al-kum* and other places as evidence. Sunnis did not accept the Shiite's interpretations of the Prophet's pronouncements. Shiites have since then suspected the Sunnis of collaboration against Ali. They believe he was deprived of his legitimate leadership. Shiites also argue that the political succession is of great importance and, as such, the Prophet could not be silent about it. They also pointed out that when Muhammad, on his deathbed, wanted to write a testament for the Muslims (*wasiyyah*), Umar prevented him because he thought he was so sick that he was unaware of what was going on around him. The Shiites consider such a bold interruption as a conspiracy against Ali.

Neither the Sunnis nor the Shiites agree with each other's interpretation. However, it should be noted that the division of Muslims into Sunnis and Shiites was a late development in Islamic history. Sunnis argue that although the issue of leadership was important, *Allah* did not reveal any verse of the *Qur'an* relevant to this issue. Not that *Allah* forgot, but He gave freedom to Muslims to decide for themselves the best way that suited their conditions and enabled them to adapt to any situation in the succeeding generations. The Shiites disagree. To this day, the problem of how Muslims should be governed and the process of election of leaders in the Muslim world are not adequately resolved, although the Shiites developed a peculiar view of Islamic governance centering on the infallible Imams. But in Islam, no human being is infallible. Only *Allah* is infallible. All human beings do wrong. The difference lies in the fact that when the prophets made mistakes, revelation would come to correct them; when an ordinary person, Imam or not, makes a mistake, there exists no revelation to put him aright. Nobody conversant with the history of Islam can deny that these Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali, made some mistakes during their reigns. They were all humans. Therefore, the claim that the Imams, especially the Shiite Imams, could not make mistakes in untenable. To err is human, according to Sunni doctrine, and many Shiites would agree.

The Umayyad Dynasty

When Ali bin Abi Talib was assassinated in 40/661 C. E., leadership of the Muslim world was seized by Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, who had been the governor of Syria since the reign of Umar. Although Ali's son Hasan was selected as Caliph by the followers of Ali, he relinquished the power to Mu'awiyah to stop the bloodshed. Mu'awiyah turned the Islamic world into a kingdom by establishing himself as a tribal king and by appointing his son, Yazid, to be his successor. Despite the fact that an Islamic world was at the brink of collapse when Mu'awiyah took over, he was able to solidify the states and put things back into perspective through his leadership: he was tough and ruthless in dealing with opponents yet exhibited unparalleled patience and wisdom in his dealing with the Bedouins. Mu'awiyah reigned in the spirit of traditional Arabic leadership, as pointed out by Annemarie Schimmel.⁵⁵ He turned Medina into the city of the Prophet, repository of piety without political power. He was able to win over Ali's followers within a short period of time through his generosity. He inflicted harsh punishment on those who insisted on disobeying him. He built a strong and powerful military in Syria as he strengthened his central government in Damascus and other big cities. He ruthlessly killed Hussein, Ali's son, and his followers in Iraq at Karbala in 680 C. E.

When Hussein died, Yazid, the Umayyad caliph, put an end to the rebellion of the Iraqis and the remaining followers of Ali bin Abi Talib. However, Hussein's disciples marked his death as redemption for the Shiites, and the occurrence of Karbala is celebrated as a "Passion Day" until today. Every year in the month of Muharram, Shiites mourn the death of Hussein and pledge to fight against injustice and oppression on the part of leaders of their community. During this mourning they pray, reminding themselves about the history and death of Hussein, and inflict injuries to their bodies as a token of participation in the tragic death and torture that Hussein received from the Umayyad's leaders.

Why was the killing of Hussein so strongly mourned by the Shiites while the assassination of Ali himself was given less attention? Was the killing of Hussein greater in the sight of *Allah* and dangerous to

55 Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam: An Introduction* p. 20.

believers than was the unjust killing of Ali, Umar or Uthman or many other Muslim leaders?

Norwithstanding, the Umayyad rulers continued to govern the Muslim world until 740 C. E. when their power began to collapse due to internal civil wars, rivalry among the heirs, and negligence of their duties toward the community.⁵⁶ Additionally, the opposition movement emerged in the name of the people of the house condemning the Umayyad's government and appealing to the people to rally around an unnamed member of the house of the Prophet (Al-Abbas) to restore true Islam and to establish justice on earth. The Umayyad Arabs had then created two classes of membership into Islam: the Mawla - the Arab leaders; and the Mawali - the protected non-Arab Muslims. The latter were unsatisfied, and tension grew between the two. Non-Arab Muslims requested the complete equality of believers as guaranteed in the *Qur'an*. The failure of the Umayyad to listen to the Mawali's requests led the latter to join the Abbasid leaders in toppling the governance of the Umayyad. The new movement recruited Abu Muslim al-Asfahani from Khurasan as its spokesman. He was able to win people over to the idea of having new leadership, which eventually came into existence in 750 C. E. in Baghdad, Iraq, after numerous killings.

The Abbasid's leaders killed Abu Muslim himself for the fear of his influence. Abu al-Abbas, a descendant of Muhammad's uncle al-Abbas, was named the new caliph. He claimed that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, a grandson of Ali, had passed on to Abbas's descendants the right of succession.⁵⁷ With the enthronement of Abu al-Abbas in Iraq, the reign of the Umayyad dynasty came to an end. The ruler in Syria, Marwan II, was expelled and killed in Egypt. The Abbasid rulers inflicted upon the Umayyad what they (the Umayyad) inflicted upon the followers of Ali bin Abi Talib. Thus, history repeated itself.

While the leaders of the Umayyad dynasty turned to tribal wars in their last days, killing one another and stopping the spread of Islam, their good deeds should not be overlooked. It was they who gave Islam its administrative structure and turned Bedouin Arabs into capable leaders of the world, at least for some centuries. They began the documentation of Islamic knowledge and nourished its sciences into different disciplines. They also spread Islam in Spain through Abd

56 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, p. 31

57 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

al-Rahman al-Dakhil, who was nicknamed the "eagle of Quraysh" (*sagr Quraysh*). Through Abd al-Rahman and his successors, Islam flourished in Spain for more than 700 years where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together peacefully.

The Abbasid Dynasty

The Abbasid dynasty emerged under the umbrella of the Shiite group, which appealed to the people to overthrow the Umayyad Empire and return the caliphate to the house of the Prophet. The Abbasids killed many believers and weakened the Islamic state under the pretext of removing Umayyad's injustices, inequalities, and corruption. The Abbasid came to power by force and used all forms of cruelty, to the extent that the first caliph of the Abbasid, Abu al-Abbas (750-754), was nicknamed the "blood-shedder" or "sucker" (*as-saffah*). He dealt ruthlessly with all his opponents. His successors were not better than he, especially al-Mansur, who tricked Abu Muslim al-Khurasani and killed him so as not to become a rival to him. At this very time, the Umayyad prince Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil escaped to Spain - established a new Islamic dynasty that reigned from 756-1492 C. E. Since Spain was far away from Baghdad, it enjoyed a long period of stability and affluence until Muslim princes began to fight one another for positions of leadership because there was no clear tradition or process of succession developed by Muslims then.

Nevertheless, in 929 C. E., Abd al-Rahman III (891-961 C. E.) became the caliph in Spain and assumed the title of Amir al-Mu'minin (Caliph), a title that the Abbasid princes reserved for themselves as the legitimate leaders of the Muslim world. History has attested to the numerous achievements of Islam, its culture and its sciences in Spain.

During the ninth to the twelfth centuries, a splendid and distinctive Islamic culture developed in Spain, enshrined in major works of Arabic poetry and prose literature, in signal contributions to Islamic philosophy, theology, and law; and in major architectural monuments such as the Great Mosque of Cordova and Abd al-Rahman's palace complex at Medina at al-Zahra. Many Christians and Jews in Islamic Spain began to adopt their rulers' Arabic language and culture, and in turn made their own contributions to the culture's brilliance.⁵⁸

58 E. Donner in *Oxford History of Islam*, 1999, p. 33

After the Abbasids came to the throne, they established themselves as had the Umayyads, by assigning the highest positions in the state to Arabs and close relatives of the Abbas and the Hashimites families because of their mistrust of other people, thus making themselves superior to non-Arabs. Since they were not militarily capable, they began to recruit the Persians, who eventually took power from the Arab leaders and kept them as puppets on their thrones. Decade after decade, the Abbasids indulged in all things which they had blamed and criticized the Umayyads for. They cared less about the spread of Islam and its promotion, although they won the support of others under the pretext of going back to the pristine state of Islam. The Shiites, who were used to supporting them, were dropped and subdued, and whomever resisted suppression was fought.

On the other hand, the Abbasids should be credited for the promotion of Islamic education. Most of their leaders encouraged learning, patronized scholars, established schools of thought, promoted sciences, and provided healthy environments for religious debates and the intellectual exchanges of ideas and knowledge. It was during their reign, especially during the reign of Haruna Rashid and Ma'mun, that Islam witnessed the mass spread of literacy and numerous translations of scientific and philosophical books from other cultures into the Arabic language, thus preserving the knowledge of past generations and other nations for all humanity. That knowledge and those translations were later transferred to Europe through the mediation of translators in Spain, which in turn spurred the growth of European science and medicine. Europeans and the West have consistently failed to give adequate credit to Arabs and Spanish Muslims for this legacy.⁵⁹

As the Abbasid central government in Baghdad expanded, the struggle for power among the princes and military personnel grew considerably. Eventually, in some areas, military leaders freed themselves from the central autonomy and carved their own independent, small states, giving themselves different titles like Sultan, "the king of." Subsequently, each state rivaled another and thus weakened the central government in Baghdad, which finally came under the attack of the s from Indian in 1258 C. E. The MongolMongol army killed the Caliph,

destroyed Baghdad, and burned thousands of books. This conquest marked the last reign of the Abbasid Empire.

Bernard Lewis, in his study of the Abbasids, has pointed out certain trends in their empire, among which he mentions the following.⁶⁰ He argues that the caliphate became an autocracy claiming divine origin for his authority as a member of the Prophet's family, resting it on his armed forces and exercising it through a vast and growing bureaucratic organization. Of course, the Abbasids came to power by appealing to religion and convincing people that their rule would be more Islamic than the Arab rule as exercised by the Umayyads. But succeeding events in the empire proved the opposite. The Abbasid caliphs were more involved in the material world than were their predecessors, if not more. Lewis adds that with the entry of Persians into the service of the caliphs, Persian influence grew in the court and in administration and, eventually, they carved out their own empires and neutralized the central government in Baghdad, whose members became powerless and were imprisoned on their thrones. Further, the Arab element and dominance in the army gradually lost its importance and non-Arab armies became the main source of political authority for various Amirs and commanders, whose power replaced that of the caliphs. Lastly, the Islamic garrison city, wherein the Muslim army enjoyed a distinctive Islam and Arab culture, was turned into a market and exchange place and in time into the center of a flourishing and diversified urban culture. Gradually, it lost its distinctiveness.⁶¹

In addition, the Abbasids involved Muslim scholars in the government to show that they were governing in accordance with the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, the prophetic traditions. Thus, they recruited religious scholars and specialists who played some part in their rule, even though the caliphs at times punished those scholars that disagreed with them, as happened to Imam Ahmad bin Hambal during the reign of Al-Ma'mun.⁶²

Nonetheless, by the end of the collapse of the Abbasid Empire, the Islamic world had grown to the East and the West. It was realistically impossible for any one central government to maintain control or exercise an adequate, effective system in all Muslim areas. Eventually,

60 Bernard Lewis, *Encyclopedia Of Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 19-20.

61 *Ibid.*

62 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 1991, pp. 36-37

59 Schimmel, *Islam, an Introduction*, pp. 22-23.

there were three caliphs who claimed to be ruler at the same time, and each was preoccupied with his area. There was a caliph in Baghdad, a caliph in Egypt, and a caliph in Spain. Albert Hourani has pointed out that even if the Abbasid caliphate was not overthrown in 1258 C. E., it would have definitely collapsed anyway because neither its military nor its administrative resources were capable enough to enable it to maintain or sustain the framework of political unity forever, especially in such an empire, which stretched from central Asia to the Atlantic coast.⁶³ However, he adds,

To have kept so many countries (the Arabs, Persians, Egyptians, Turks, and others) with differing traditions and interests, in a single empire for so long (750-1258) had been a remarkable achievement. It could scarcely have been done without the force of religious conviction, which had formed an effective ruling group in Western Arabia, and had then created an alliance of interests between that group and an expanding section of the societies over which it ruled.⁶⁴

Islam in Other Parts of the World

The spread of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries was not limited to Persia and Spain, but also made its way into North Africa, Asia, India, China and many other places. Muslims' contact with Africa occurred during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad around 615-616 C. E. when he sent seventy-two of his new followers to Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) to seek refuge with a Christian king named Negus. Muslim immigrants stayed in Abyssinia for several years and spread their religion.⁶⁵ Later, Islam spread to Egypt in 642 C. E. and to North

63 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

64 *Ibid.*

65 One of the interesting stories that happened in Abyssinia was the conversion of the companions of the Prophet to Christianity. Abd Allah bin Jahsh, the husband of Ramlat bint Abi Sufyan converted and all the efforts to bring him back to Islam failed. He died in Abyssinia a non-believer. His wife, Ramlat Umm Habibat, returned to Medina and joined the Muslims. Interestingly, Prophet Muhammad did not order that he should be killed or punished. Rather, he

Africa around 670 C. E. through 'Uqbah bin Nafi'. In the 8th century, Islam made its first contact with West African people, and it remains there today. Africans spread Islam among themselves. Islam did not reach West Africa because of the slave trade. Africans were enslaving themselves before their contact with the Muslim Arabs.

The spread of Islam in Africa and in many Asian countries occurred mainly through Muslim traders and mystic masters, the Sufis, who practiced Islam in their daily lives. The indigenous people admired their way of life and evident spirituality and eventually joined Islam through them. Africans felt at home with Islam due to many similarities between Islamic and African traditional beliefs. The social structure of both traditions was also identical. Africans never found themselves alienated by Islam. The history of the spread of Islam in Africa has been well documented. Islam has affected the lives of millions of Africans, and there is no country in Africa where Islam has not reached. Although much research has been conducted on the impact of Islam on African people and their beliefs, little attention has been paid to the great influence of African beliefs in shaping Islam and Christianity in Africa. Local customs are still followed by African Muslims in many aspects of life instead of Islamic laws, as advocated by Muhammad, or by the *Qur'an*. Africans are notoriously religious. And, therefore, it is hard for any religion, be it a revealed or non-revealed religion, *not* to be impacted by the beliefs of the Africans. Such impact has led to the emergence of new religious movements in Africa, especially Sufi movements, which took Islam to nearly every home through their commitment and devotion to their religion. Of course, some of these Sufis were extremists and hardly practiced pristine Islam. Most Africans today profess Islam by their own choice rather than by coercion or holy war, the *Jihad*, as is often propagated by non-Muslims. People are also attracted to Islam through trade, literacy, and becoming members of the universal Muslim world. Finally, many converts to Islam see Islam as a pragmatic religion that relates to their daily lives. This practicality has won many members to Islam in Africa and many other places.

left him alone and the Muslims in Abyssinia tried their best to win him back, but failed. For more information, see Muhammad and Mahdi al-Istanbuli, *Nisa' Hawla al-Rasul (Women Around the Prophet)*, Jeddah, Maktabat al-Tawaadi li Tawzi', 1996), pp. 79-84.

Summary

The death of Muhammad in 632 C. E did not mark the end of Islam; rather it was the beginning of an Islamic expansion all over the world. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, was selected as Muhammad's successor. He took leadership of the Muslims very seriously and curbed all those who attempted to rebel against Islam because of the death of Muhammad. He fought the Arabs and united Muslims under one umbrella in Medina. He ordered the compilation of the *Qur'an* from those who memorized it and kept a copy with the Prophet's wife, Hafsat. He ruled for two years and five months before he died in 634 C. E. He suggested his followers select Umar as his successor and, after a short deliberation, Umar bin al-Khattab was selected the second caliph in Islam. Umar ruled with justice, fairness, and compassion. He spread Islam to the Arabian Peninsula and brought the Byzantine and the Persians into the fold of Islam before he died. It was during his reign that the Muslim army conquered Jerusalem; Umar himself went there to celebrate the event. He allowed both Christians and Jews in Jerusalem to practice their religions and live together peacefully with Muslims. They enjoyed peaceful co-existence until the Christian crusaders invaded Jerusalem at the end of 11th century and massacred both Muslims and Jews. Umar was known to be a just leader and the second founder of Islam due to many things he established and introduced into Islam in terms of structure. He was very innovative and an ambassador of change in Islam. Despite his good governance, a slave killed him, claiming that Umar did not attend to his needs. Umar died in Medina and was buried beside the grave of the Prophet there. Before he died, he appointed an electoral committee to select a successor after him. After a long deliberation, the committee selected Uthman bin Affan the third caliph in Islam.

Uthman bin Affan was an intimate friend of Muhammad's and his son-in-law. He married two of Muhammad's daughters, Rukayyah and Umm Kulthum. He was a trader and one of the wealthiest companions. When he became the Caliph, he oversaw the final compilation of the *Qur'an*, made several copies of it and sent it to different districts, encouraging all Muslims to follow it. He ordered that all other copies of the *Qur'an* possessed by individuals be burned so as to maintain the unity of the *Qur'an*. Uthman was not a strong leader like Abu Bakr

or Umar. Hence, there were weaknesses in his administration and he was suspected of favoring his tribe at Mecca in allocating of wealth and distribution of leadership posts. Such allegations led to conspiracy against him and rebels from Syria and Egypt finally assassinated him in Medina in 656 C. E. However, he ruled for many years longer than any of the other caliphs, twelve years and few months, yet his reign was fraught with many problems and uneasiness. Still, he was known to be a pious, generous and compassionate human being.

Ali bin Abi Talib became the fourth Caliph and had a rough time of it. His election was not unanimous as were those of his predecessors. Hence, a few strong companions of Prophet Muhammad objected to his leadership, including the youngest wife of the Prophet, A'ishat. His opponents requested from the beginning that he punish the rebels who killed Uthman, but he was unable to do so because he could not identify the killers. The leaders and governors whom Uthman had appointed refused to surrender to the authority of Ali and failed to accept the leaders that Ali appointed. Eventually, Ali challenged these opponents and fought them in the battle. He won many of these battles, but could not escape his assassination by Abu Lu 'lu' in 661 C. E. With his death, leadership of the Muslims remained in the hands of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, Ali's major rival.

Mu'awiyah took over after Ali and turned the Islamic states into an empire. He ruled like an old Arab leader (Shaykh) and through his patience, kindness and generosity to the Arabs, was able to appoint his son, Yazid bin Abihi, as his successor. From that time on, Islamic leadership has been based on inheritance whereby a son inherits from his father, and grandson gained inheritance from his father. In short, Islamic rule became a monarchy. Mu'awiyah and his descendants ruled from 661 C. E. until 750 C. E., when the Umayyad overthrew them and established their own empire, which lasted for another 500 years.

Nonetheless, Mu'awiyah expanded the territories of Islam and it was during his reign that Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, and all of the Arabian peninsula were conquered and annexed into the Islamic empire. Islam was also spread in North Africa by Uqbah bin Nafi', who eventually established the city of Qayrawan and built a garrison there. After the death of Mu'awiyah, his son Yazid took over and it was he

who ordered the killing of Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad, in Karbala in 681 C. E. in Iraq. King after king ruled after Yazid until the Umayyad's empire was weakened by internal disputes and rivalry for leadership. Hence the Abbasid Empire took over but their leaders were not better than their predecessors. They too fought one another over the throne until they became so weak that they were conquered by the s in 1258 C. E. in Iraq. However, credit should be given to the Umayyad Empire for their leaders' interests in establishing and documenting Islamic sciences. They placed high priority on learning and established schools for the community. Their leaders were patrons of Islamic knowledge. The Umayyads ruled until the middle of 8th century; their achievements in the arts and architecture were remarkable. Persian and Byzantine styles were transformed by Islamic concepts; they also Islamized and Arabized their bureaucracies.

When the Abbasids took over, they expanded on what they had found and extended the Arabization of Roman and Persian sciences. They translated most of the books in those traditions into the Arabic language and preserved them for the next generation. Without their efforts, the sciences of the Romans and Persians might have been lost forever. Unfortunately, the West fails to give proper recognition to Arab and Muslim pioneers for this transmission of knowledge to the West.

Suggested Readings:

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Chapter IV

Islam and Its Beliefs

Introduction

The Islamic religion is based on faith and action. If a Muslim believes in something but does not follow it up with action, his Islam is questionable. Every action is calculated and one's attainment of success (paradise) in the next world depends partially upon one's deeds on earth and the mercy of God. If a Muslim has no good deeds to substantiate his faith, his faith alone will not win him success in the next world. Islam rejects the concept of justification by faith as preached by some Christians. Faith and good deeds lead to success, not faith alone.

The First Article of Faith: Belief in One God and in Muhammad as God's Messenger

Islamic religion rests on basic beliefs which are known as Islamic doctrines (*usul al-Din*). There are many basic beliefs but six of them are considered most essential. The most important among them is the belief in the oneness of God, *Allah*. This is not just a conviction about the existence of God, but the recognition that He alone is the Creator, Master, Ruler and the Administrator of all that exists on earth and in heaven. God says in the *Qur'an*, "It is He who created the heavens and the earth in true proportions." (*Qur'an* 6:73) This belief implies that He alone deserves to be worshipped. He has no rival, no partner, and no son. He is Eternal. Muslim theologians call this idea "the concept

of *Tawhid*," the Unity of God, which is expressed in the Islamic declaration of faith as: *Lailaha ila Labu*, there is no god but *Allah*.

The other part of the testimony is the affirmation that Muhammad, the son of Abdullah, is God's messenger. This confession is tantamount to accepting the message of Islam, accepting the *Qur'an* as the complete words of God and the readiness to obey Muhammad, who brought the message to human beings. The primary task of Prophet Muhammad was to communicate God's message to human beings. He himself had no power to make people righteous or faithful; he had no power to punish unbelievers; he could not even account for those who disbelieved, for he was only a messenger. His duty was to bring human beings back to God. If he fabricated anything, he would incur God's displeasure and punishment. Certainly, he was a human being like all others except that God chose him to be a prophet and he received a message from Him.

Say I am a man like you, a mortal man (*bashar*), who receives revelation from his Lord. (*Qur'an* 18:110)

Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers the like of who have passed away before him. (*Qur'an* 3:144)

Here we have both the humanity and the distinctiveness of the Prophet Muhammad affirmed simultaneously. Thus, he should not be turned into a demigod - a fate some of the former prophets suffered at the hands of their followers. He was a human being and an exemplar for Muslims in all aspects of life. Muslims are expected to follow Muhammad because it is through him that they receive messages from God and because he was the true interpreter of these messages.

The Second Article of Faith: Belief in the Angels

The second article of faith is the belief in God's angels, who are perceived as "other" creatures. They are neither humans nor jinn. They are created from light and carry out whatever God assigned them to do. Some of them are mentioned by name in the *Qur'an*. They always do whatever God wants them to do; they have no freedom to act against God's orders. They are free from sin. The angels are the messengers between God and the prophets; they also keep records of human deeds

on earth and will present them on the Day of Judgment for the final justice by God.

Muslims lack true knowledge about the nature of angels or their attributes or qualities. They do not know whether they are male or female. Muslims believe in them because they are told to do so in the *Qur'an*. Any denial of them is tantamount to disbelieving in Muhammad's message. The angels are not children of God, nor His wives or rivals; they are servants and messengers of God. Belief in their existence is part of the belief in the unseen (*ghayb*). In Islam, man has a greater position than the angels and, as a result, God requested them to bow to Adam, the first man, after his creation (*Qur'an* 2:29-31).

The Third Article of Faith: Belief in the Holy Books Sent by God

Islam requires its adherents to believe that God revealed many books to different prophets before Muhammad. God revealed the *Qur'an* to Muhammad, which is the last message to all human beings. With this belief, Islam recognizes and acknowledges the divine scriptures sent to different nations through different messengers, which shows that the source of those messages was the same. Such recognition does not imply one must follow the previous messages, because Muslims believe that God's words have been mixed with human interpretations; therefore, it is difficult to distinguish between what God said and what humans added to the revealed texts of other religions. However, Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is not the only revealed book, but that there are other books sent by God to different nations like the Torah, the Bible, and the Psalms to meet the needs of those particular people. Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is the last scripture to be sent as a code of life for all humanity.

The Fourth Article: Belief in the Prophets of God

As Muslims believe in the books of God, they must also recognize that God sent many prophets to different peoples and nations. Those prophets brought divine messages to their nations to link them with God. However, Muslims assume that those messages were culturally

conditioned, locally bound, and incomplete. At times, their followers tampered with them. Therefore, Muhammad came to complete the message. God sent him as a mercy to all human beings. Of the many prophets sent by God, only twenty-five are mentioned in the *Qur'an*. The history of some of the prophets was fully narrated, while others are briefly mentioned. Jews and Christians do not recognize some prophets who are recognized by Muslims. Yet, there are Jewish and Christian prophets of whom the Muslims are unaware, such as Amos, Jeremiah, etc. At times, some of the stories of the prophets narrated in the *Qur'an* correspond to what had been narrated in old scriptures like the Old Testament or the New Testament. Occasionally, the narrations contradict one another. When that occurs, or when there is additional information in the *Qur'an*, Muslims follow the *Qur'an*. They suspect that the narrations in other traditions might have been tampered with or adulterated. They believe that God sent Muhammad as the last prophet to purify and put aright the previous messages and to bring human beings back to Him.. There are prophets who received divine revelation and there are others who did not. They followed the revelation of their predecessors. There was typically only one prophet at a time, but occasionally there were two or more prophets at the same time, such as with Moses and Zachary, or Jacob and his sons, the Israelites.

Belief in prophets involves the acceptance of their authority, the path, and the laws they convey to human beings on behalf of God. Obeying them is the way through which the will of God can be fulfilled on earth. God says in the *Qur'an*:

Every messenger who was sent by us was sent for the purpose that he should be obeyed under the sanction of Allah. (*Qur'an* 4:69)

Nay, O Muhammad, by your Lord, they will not be (true) believers until they accept you as the final arbiter in all their disputes and submit to your decision wholeheartedly without any heartache. (*Qur'an* 4:65)

Muslims strongly believe that Muhammad was God's last messenger and conclude that God will not speak to anyone after Muhammad, that is, there will be no prophets or messengers after him. Based on this

conviction, Muslims do not recognize Baha'ullah, Ahmad Ghullam or Guru Nanack as prophets. Sunni Muslims (the orthodox Muslims) strongly believe that there will be no true prophet after Muhammad. For example, Sunnis do not consider members of the Nation of Islam to be Muslims, because the Nation of Islam believes that Wallace Fard was God and that Elijah Muhammad was a prophet. It should also be noted that Muslims also do not believe that Jesus was God or the son of God. To Muslims, Jesus was not a biological son of God and did not die to take away the sins of human beings, as Christians believe. In Islam, God has no need to punish innocent persons like Jesus in order to accord His pardon to other repentant sinners. The vicarious punishment of Jesus (on behalf of others, as believed by Christians) would be unjust on the part of God.

The Fifth Article: Belief in Life after Death

Muslims are required to believe in life after death. The present life is temporal, a place of action and trial. Everyone will eventually depart it sooner or later and must account for all that he or she does during the course of his or her life. The present life will come to an end by the order of God, who created it in the beginning. After a lapse of time, God will bring humans back to life for judgment. Those who live a life of obedience to *Allah* in the present world will enjoy eternal bliss in the hereafter for their good deeds; those who live a life of disobedience in the present world will reap the bitter fruits of their evil deeds by going to eternal hell fire if they do not repent before they die. Muslims believe that two angels are assigned to each person. The angel on his right side records all his good deeds and the angel on the left shoulder records all his bad deeds. On the Day of Judgment, *Allah* will bring forth to him a book which shall be proffered to him wide-open. "Read your record," he will be told, "for this day there need be none but yourself to make out an account against you." (*Qur'an* 17:13-14)

The *Qur'an* emphasizes in several places that only God will remain and all other creatures will perish. Then all human beings will be resurrected physically on the Day of Judgment and stand trial. The *Qur'an* says:

Every soul shall taste death; you shall surely be paid in full your wages on the day of resurrection. Whosoever is

removed from the hell-fire and admitted into paradise, shall win the triumph. The present life is but the joy of delusion. (*Qur'an* 3:185)

The *Qur'an* describes the events of the Day of Judgment as follows: first, how people will be resurrected, stand trial, and care less about one another for they will be too busy with their own problems. The *Qur'an* explains what will happen to those who win entrance to heaven (paradise) and the punishment intended for those who disobeyed God on earth.

As we've stated, life after death is taught to Muslims as reality. However, the time of expiry of one's life on earth remains unknown to human beings. Death and physical resurrection are real and not merely states of mind, as believed by the Baha'is and others. Muslims are encouraged to long for paradise by performing good deeds and seeking forgiveness for their mistakes. The *Qur'an* clearly declares that God, who created man in the beginning from nothing, is capable of bringing him back again. According to the *Qur'an*, an angel will blow his trumpet and all humans will wake up from their graves the way vegetables grow after a rain.

Verily we shall give life to the dead, and we record all that they send before and they leave behind, and we have taken account of all things in a clear book of evidence. (*Qur'an* 36:12)

It is in the hereafter that every individual will account for his or her deeds – this is the primary aim of resurrection. Judgment or the evaluation of one's works is so that God can reward the faithful and punish the disbelievers, those who reject God and his message. This is the last destiny of a person: eternal life or eternal hell. Further, humans will experience the state of heaven and hell physically. The reality of such an experience is not known to us now, although the *Qur'an* vividly describes what a person may expect in paradise and in hell, as stated in chapters 82:1-2 and 10:24-27. Thus, the hereafter is an extension of our existence, but the end result of the life we live here on earth. One reaps in the hereafter that which one sows in this life. If a person sows wheat, he reaps wheat; if he sows corn, he reaps corn; if he sows thorn, he reaps thorn. Therefore, if he sows nothing by doing no good deed

on earth, he reaps nothing in the hereafter; this is why the sages have said that this world is the cultivating ground for the next.⁶⁶

The majority of Muslims believe the bodily resurrection of human beings is real and not symbolic, as is clearly stated in the *Qur'an* and in the *Sunnah*. Muhammad described it when he journeyed to heaven during the *Isra'* and *Mi'raj*. Paradise is eternal, and Hell is eternal too. Once a person goes into paradise, he will not be removed from it. But if a person goes to hell, he may be removed through the mercy of God after he has served his time there, and then he will be sent to paradise. According to Islam, Muslims are not the only people going to heaven. The followers of the prophets, who obeyed and lived the lives designed for them by their prophets will go to heaven. In addition, anyone God wants to go to heaven will go. No religion has a monopoly on heaven.

The Sixth Article of Faith: Belief in Predestination (*al-Qada' wa al-Qadar*)

In addition to the above, Muslims believe in predestination. Muslim understanding of this concept focuses on the idea that what happens to a Muslim at last (the end, in any event) is what God wants to happen to him. However, that person must take all necessary actions and then rely on God. And since a Muslim does not know exactly what has been decreed for him, he has choices to make and cannot employ the concept of predestination (*Qadar*) as an excuse not to act. The *Qur'an* itself is ambiguous about predestination. In some verses, the *Qur'an* reiterates that man is responsible for all his actions. Nevertheless, a majority of Muslims believe that human beings are free agents and thus responsible and accountable for their deeds. It is on this basis that they refer to the event of the creation of Adam, whereby God gave him the ability to choose whether or not to eat from the forbidden tree, and was told of the consequences of his action. (*Qur'an* 2:29-33) When he chose to eat, he was condemned until he repented to God and was forgiven.

At the same time, there are several verses in the *Qur'an* that imply that God has decreed everything before its occurrence and therefore human beings are just acting out what has been predestined for them.

66 Abu A'ala Mawdudi, *Fundamental of Islam* (Islamic Publication Ltd, Pakistan, Lahore, 1980), pp. 42-3.

What God grants to men out of His mercy, no one can withhold and what He withholds, no one can grant apart from Him, and He is the Powerful, the Wise. (*Qur'an* 35:2)

Whomsoever God guides, he is rightly guided; and whom He leads astray, they are the losers. (*Qur'an* 7:178)

No misfortune can befall on earth or in yourselves but is recorded in a book (of God's decree) before God brings it into existence. (*Qur'an* 57:22)

These verses explain that God decrees everything that happens to man. The question then would be why humans are punished for wrong doing if they have no choice but to do what has been programmed for them. There is no easy answer to this question. However, Muslim theologians are of the opinion that since a person knows not what will happen to him, he should make a sincere effort, strive for his best and then rely upon God for the consequences. If the result happens to be positive, he thanks God; if it is negative, he accepts and endures it with patience because he knows that everything is under the control of God, the all wise. However, when he fails to make any effort, he can only blame himself for a negative result.

This point can be better illustrated with an example. As a teacher, let's assume that two students attend my X course, and I speak to both on the first day. Throughout my conversation with them, I say to myself that Student A will probably do well in this course, while Student B will likely not do well. I make this judgment based upon my experience in teaching. That is, Student A shows great interest, while Student B does not show any interest. Student B comes to class because he must take this class. If he were given a choice, he would not have registered for my class. Regardless of their level of interest, I give both my syllabus, teach them at the same time, encourage both to study and give them ample chance to meet or talk to me at any time during the semester. I promise to help them. The semester concludes and Student A, whom I thought would succeed, receives an A-grade, while Student B receives an F-grade, as I predicted. Was I the cause of Student B's failure? I don't think so. Though he did not know what I had in mind, I did not give any extra privilege to Student A. I did not teach Student

A separately. The same opportunities were afforded to both students. Both were taught and given an equal amount of attention, knowledge, information and support. Therefore, I was not the cause of Student B's failure. I would be very happy were he to achieve an A or B grade. Likewise, God's knowledge of what will happen to humans does not prevent us from being responsible for our actions and deeds. That is why the *Qur'an* states:

That whatever misfortune that befalls you is the result of what your hand has committed or earned. However, God overlooks a lot of your mistakes. He pardons much. (*Qur'an* 42:30)

Why does God allow bad things to happen, especially to good or righteous people? This is an entirely different question and Muslim theologians have dealt with it in various ways. A full discussion of this question, however, is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice it to state here that Muslims do not believe in the law of randomness or chance. And since God is Almighty, the Creator, He is free to do what He wants, when He wants, with His creatures. Similar to the way a farmer will do in his will in raising milk cows, goats or chickens, whatever he pleases. If the farmer wants, he can kill one of the chickens, roast it and eat it. If he desires, he can sell it or give it to a friend for Thanksgiving. Does the chicken or goat have the right to say to his master "don't kill me, don't eat me, don't sell me?" The animal does not know what decision is made on its behalf. Likewise, in Islam, God created all creatures, including human beings, and He has the absolute right to do with His creatures as He wills. His action is not be considered unfair at all, because God is exercising His divine right as "the Creator." Muslims submit to God and normally refrain from questioning God because He is not human; He is the Lord of all the worlds. Even when we question Him, we are not going to receive any answer except our human answer, which is molded by human perception. And, as we know, the limited cannot fully describe or comprehend the unlimited. A belief in predestination amounts to a belief in the unknown, which is part and parcel of Islamic basic beliefs.

Further, the majority of Muslims believe that God knows what will happen to His creatures. He gives them choices to make, upon which they will be judged for their deeds. And since God is also believed to

be Merciful, He encourages humans to seek His favor and forgiveness whenever they do wrong.

Muslims believe that nothing can happen in the universe against the will of *Allah*; He supervises everything. This does not mean that He himself does everything or causes it to happen. It simply means that the laws of the universe operate according to His will. He has made them and set them in motion. Only He has the power over them and can cause them to stop as He wills. ...Muslims, however, believe that nothing in the universe could come about as a result of blind coincidence. Such a term has no entry in the Muslim lexicon.⁶⁷

Finally, then, there are two strong views about predestination. One is that God has decreed everything before He created human beings and, as such, God is the sole operator of human actions; nothing can change from what has been predestined. Human beings do only what God has decreed for them. This viewpoint rests on the understanding of chapter 57:22 of the *Qur'an*.

No misfortune can happen on earth or in your souls but is recorded in a book before We bring it into existence. That is truly easy for *Allah*. (*Qur'an* 57:22)

The second viewpoint is that humans are free agents and have choices to make in many things and in the course of their daily lives. Whatever they do depends on their freedom and choices, as stated in chapter 42:30 of the *Qur'an*.

Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many (a sin) He grants forgiveness. (*Qur'an* 42:30)

One could argue that God decrees some actions and events, while allowing humans to make choices about others. For example, a person has no choice or decision in being male or female, or why he was

67 M.A. Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet* (Massachusetts: Element Books, 1995), pp. 204-205.

born, or when or where his death will be. These are natural things that he found himself born into. Man does not make a choice to be born or not; however, there are certain things he must do to remain alive. For instance, he may delay eating or drinking for some days, but if he refrains from eating and drinking completely, he will die. This is a natural law, which God has set to control the universe. On the other hand, whether a person must attend school, engage in a certain business, tell the truth or lie are all decisions left to human choice. Consequently, the individual human will be responsible for his or her decisions and actions whether good or bad. A student who does not study for a test should not blame God for his failure but blame himself for his laziness.

The Five Pillars of Islam

The five pillars are the essential rituals of Islam. They are the ways in which the Islamic beliefs are put into action. As stated earlier, Islam emphasizes faith and action. When a person believes and fails to practice, his Islam remains incomplete. These five pillars are the bedrock of religion in Islam. Believing in them allows one membership in the Muslim community; practicing them grants one the title of true believer (*mumin*), which is a higher stage of being. Neglecting any one of them would render all of them void, just as with the pillars of a house. If one pillar falls, the whole house will fall. On that basis, Abu Bakr, the first caliph and the immediate successor to Muhammad, vigorously fought those Muslims who decided not to pay the poor dues (*Zakat*) after Muhammad's death. Abu Bakr argued that the five pillars are holistic and should not be separated; otherwise, Islam will be incomplete. Prophet Muhammad has said that Islam is based on five principles.

'Umar bin al-Khattab (may *Allah* be pleased with him) said he heard the messenger of *Allah* (may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be upon him) said: Islam has been built on five (pillars): testifying that there is no god but *Allah* and that Muhammad is the messenger of *Allah*, performing the prayers, paying the *Zakat* (almsgiving to

the poor), making the pilgrimage to the house (Ka'aba) at Mecca, and fasting in (the month of) *Ramadan*.⁶⁸

The First Pillar

The first pillar of Islam is *Shahadatayn*: to witness that there is no god but *Allah* and that Muhammad is His messenger (*Lailaha ila Lahu, Muhammadun Rasulullah*). That Muhammad is the last prophet is stated in the *Qur'an* 33:40, which affirms that Muhammad was the seal of the prophets. A person becomes a Muslim by pronouncing the phrase "*Ash hadu an Lailaha ila Lahu wa ash hadu ana Muhammadan Rasulullah*" (I bear witness that there is no god but *Allah* and that Muhammad is His messenger). This is known as the "declaration of faith." It implies that God was there yesterday, He is here now, and will be there tomorrow, and that nothing is absolutely real except God. He is the first, the last, the known, the unknown, the Creator of all creatures, and the Lord of all the worlds. Acknowledging God as One implies that He deserves to be worshipped; that He is the Lord, and the believer is His servant ('*abd*). He is the master and all things are subservient to Him. In other words, there should be a total submission on the part of the servant (a Muslim) to God. Believing in God and rejecting Muhammad amounts to disbelief in God. Grasping the full meaning of belief in one God enables Muslims to have a real understanding that they will give no allegiance, loyalty, worship or obedience to anyone else. All other deities, lords, kings and idols are creatures of God; they do not deserve to be worshipped or obeyed in Islamic belief. Thus, God is One and Eternal; He has no partner and no son.

Say He is God, The One and Only. God is the Eternal, the Absolute. He begets not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him. (*Qur'an* 112:1-3)

Islam teaches Muslims to follow and respect the guidance sent by God to His prophets, but realize that the prophets are his creations, not gods themselves, and should not be worshiped or revered as such. The acknowledgement of Jesus as "the Lord" or son of God is offensive to Muslims because it suggests making association with God, which is

⁶⁸ Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim, see Ibn Hajar, *Fathul Bari*, vol.1, p. 64.

considered *Shirk* in Islam. The reason for this is that one gives thanks to another or creature that does not deserve it; absolute worship and thanks is reserved for God (*Allah*) only.

The second part of the declaration of faith rests on Muslim's readiness to follow the guidance brought by the Prophet Muhammad as a complete guidance for all humanity. Muslims believe that by obeying him, they will be successful in this life and the life after. God sent Muhammad with a code of law to instruct believers what they should do to win God's pleasure. Thus, recognizing and affirming this statement amounts to a submission to God, obedience to his prophet and following his message. To Muslims, this testimony (*shahadatayn*) is a statement of intent to be a Muslim, which must result in action in everyday life. The remaining four pillars are the practical aspects of the belief in one God and recognizing Muhammad as God's messenger.

The Second Pillar is Salat: The Muslim Daily Prayer

The second most important duty of a Muslim after believing in one God and recognizing Muhammad as His messenger is the performance of *Salat*, the act of daily prayer. Although *Salat* has often been rendered as "prayer" in English, it is more than ordinary prayer. Prayer in Christian understanding is equivalent to Muslim supplication (*du'a*) in Islam. *Salat* means the act of total submission to God by performing multi-faceted activities of worship at prescribed periods, five times daily, in order to strengthen one's relationship with God. Why do Muslims have to pray every day, and five times instead of once or twice? There are many answers to this question. Foremost, Muslims perform *salat* (prayer) because God so ordained through His prophet Muhammad. Islam demands Muslims be "doers" and not merely believers or listeners.

Establishing *salat* reminds a Muslim of his relationship with God; he truly belongs to God and not to himself or to any other person. He is a servant of God, who is the Master.⁶⁹ The ultimate objective is to please God and win His mercy. And since *salat* is required five times daily, one who practices it hardly forgets God, or indulges in shameful acts. The *Qur'an* emphasizes that establishing *salat* will prevent Muslims from doing sinful acts. (*Qur'an* 29: 45)

69 Suzanne Haneef, *What Everyone Should Know About Islam*, p. 43.

However, before performing *salat*, there are a few requirements. The most essential is the purification (*tabarrah*) of the body. There are different kinds of purification. They include: purification of the body, of one's cloth, and of the places of worship. Failure to be in a state of purity will render one's worship void and unacceptable. Prophet Muhammad said in one report that purification amounts to one-half of the faith. The *Qur'an* commands Muslims to perform ablution (*wudu'*) before making prayer (*salat*).

O you who believe, when you rise for prayer, wash your faces, your hands up to the elbows, lightly rub your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. (*Qur'an* 5:6)

Although the above verse states four things that must be done in ablution, the Prophet added a few others. Islam teaches Muslims to obey whatever Prophet Muhammad told them to do.

A Muslim begins making an ablution (*wudu'*) by saying: "*In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful.*" Of course, Muslims say this phrase before they begin or do anything. This is accompanied by intention (*niyyat*) to be in a state of purification or readiness to worship God. Making intention guides Muslims to be conscious of what they are doing and why they are doing it. It should not be said out loud. The following is how to make purification (ablution).

1. Wash the hands three times (*Qur'an* 5:6).
2. Rinse the mouth three times (this was added by the Prophet Muhammad).
3. Sniff up and blow water out three times (this also was added by the Prophet Muhammad).
4. Wash the face (*Qur'an* 5:6) by running water from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the jaw, and from one ear to another.
5. Wash the arms to the elbow (this is mentioned in the *Qur'an* 5: 6).
6. Wipe or rub the head once (this is mentioned in the *Qur'an*).
7. Rub the ears once (this was added by the Prophet Muhammad).
8. Wash the feet and the heels (this is mentioned in the *Qur'an*).

This ritual ends by reciting a prayer known as "*shahadah*" by saying "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His messenger." The aforementioned must be done in order and each action must begin with the right side. That is, one must begin washing one's right hand before washing the left hand.

A Muslim who fails to make ablution before performing his prayer receives no reward for his prayer, as reported in a *Hadith* in which the Prophet Muhammad said: "Allah does not accept the prayer of one who nullifies his ablution (*wudu*) until he performs it again."⁷⁰ If one cannot make ablution for one reason or another, he can make *Tayammum* (sand cleanliness) by rubbing his face and hands with clean earth.

Once the ablution is done, one stays in a state of purity and cleanliness until such state is nullified by one or all of the following: answering the call of nature by urinating, defecating, passing gas, deep sleep or loss of consciousness, or by the immediate touching of private bodily parts. One has to take a bath and make *wudu* whenever one has sexual relations with one's spouse. When one of these happens, a Muslim must make another ablution before communicating with God. The whole idea of ablution is to be in a physical state of cleanliness at all times and enter into a sacred time and space. The spiritual aspect of purification is achieved, as pointed out by Denny,

Through an aware, dedicated life in which kindness, concern for others, gratitude and openness to God, and sensitivity to moral issues dominate.⁷¹

Performing the Islamic Five Daily Prayers

After making an ablution, a Muslim stands up to pray. Prayer is communication with God. Muslims pray by facing the *Qiblat* (the direction of *Ka'aba* at Mecca). Before prayer, they make *Adhan* (a call for prayer). This is followed by a series of commands, performances, and

recitations (the ritual's CPR). That is, the *salat* consists of commands, whereby a person who performs it says for instance "*Allahu Akbar*" (God is Great), which is followed by an action like standing, the folding of one's hand to one's chest, bending, raising one's head from bending, prostrating, sitting and standing up again. Saying *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) is a command. The actions are performances, which are followed by recitation from the *Qur'an* and repetition of some specified prayers (*du'a*). An example of recitation is the reading of the opening chapter of the *Qur'an*, *surat al-Fatihah*. An example of saying of a prayer (*du'a*) is saying: "*Rabbana wa Lakal Hamdu*," which means: "O Lord, all Glory be to You." These commands, performances, and recitations are all aimed at glorifying God and thanking Him for His guidance and blessings. They are also expressions of submission, humility and adoration of God, the Almighty. Islam requires a Muslim to pray five times daily at specific times: at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night. Of course, the *Qur'an* enjoins daily prayers; it was the Prophet Muhammad who set the time and format of each prayer, and the units of each prayer. Thus, Muhammad said that the morning prayer (*Fajr*) should be two units, noon prayer (*Zuhr*) is four units, afternoon prayer (*Asr*) is four units, sunset prayer (*Maghrib*) is three units, while the night prayer (*Ishai*) should be four units. These are obligatory (*fard*) worships. However, the Prophet encouraged Muslims to perform supplementary prayers (*nawafil*) and to attend Friday prayers (*Salat al-Jum'at*), as well. The Friday prayer is a weekly gathering where Muslims learn about human equality and community solidarity. At prayer, all Muslims, rich, poor, lower, and powerful, all stand in the same row, shoulder to shoulder, facing the same direction in praising God. Friday prayer occurs once on every Friday at noon. All Muslim men are required to attend it. Women are given the option to attend or not. In many Muslim countries, women attend *Jum'at* at prayer, except in Arabia where it is discouraged.

Muslims are expected to pray together in congregation at the mosque. Although a Muslim can pray at home or at work, praying at the mosque is preferable and merits more rewards. The mosque plays an important role in a Muslim daily life. It is the center of activities, a house of God, and a place of worship. Suzanne Haneef captures the spirit of praying in congregation when she says:

⁷⁰ Narrated by Imam Tirmizi. See *Fiqh al-Sunnah English version*, vol. 1:25-27 on ablution.

⁷¹ Frederick Denny, *Introduction to Islam*, pp. 113, 118.

In such a congregational prayer, in which Muslims stand in straight rows, shoulder to shoulder, as one body united in the worship of God, the elements of discipline, orderliness, brotherhood, equality, and solidarity are very strongly exemplified.⁷²

When Muslims pray in congregation, men stand in the front rows, followed by children, and then women. Muslims claim that this was how Muhammad instructed his followers to line up in prayer. Such an order allows each group to concentrate on their prayer without being distracted by the opposite sex. It does not imply, in any sense, that women are inferior to men, or that they are second-class. The best Muslim before God is the most pious, whether male or female. When women pray by themselves, one of them leads the prayer. At times, there is a divider or wall between men's and women's rows. However, each community has the freedom to discern for its group what best fits their interests and goals, for Islam is a flexible religion. Any person who leads the prayer is called an *Imam*. He must be knowledgeable about Islam and able to recite the *Qur'an* properly. Imams are not ordained, for there is no ordination in Islam. Often times, their services are voluntary. Muslims become Imams through their knowledge and community recognition of their moral quality and services.

Why should a person pray five times daily and not once or twice? Why can't these prayers all be performed in the morning or all at night instead of five different periods, since each prayer lasts from five to ten minutes only? First, Muslims regard prayer as the most important form of worship in Islam; it is an expression of submission to God and, therefore, must be performed as described by the Prophet Muhammad. Since he allotted a specific time for each prayer, Muslims have no choice but to abide by this; they cannot change it. As to the primary purpose of *salat* and its usefulness, God said in the *Qur'an* 29:45 "Verily, prayer (*salat*) restrains (its performers) from shameful and unjust deeds." *Salat* should not become mere routine or mechanical pronouncements and movements of the body; it must be a discipline, a way of nurturing the human soul and uplifting it to *Allah*.⁷³

Salat is a multi-faceted act of worship. Performing it regularly serves as a repeated reminder to the Muslim during the day and night of his relationship with his creator and his place in the total scheme of reality. Its purpose is to keep him from ever forgetting that he belongs, not to himself or even to the people who are closest to him but to God, and that he is His slave, obedient to His command. The remembrance of Him and glorification of Him for a brief, concentrated period in the midst of his daily activities keeps this perspective always clear and intact.⁷⁴

Salat is the second pillar of Islam and a daily spiritual journey. Performing it regularly differentiates a Muslim from a non-Muslim. It is preceded by a purification ritual known as (*wudu'*). A Muslim recites the *Qur'an* aloud in the morning, at sunset and night prayers, particularly in the first two units. In all other units, one recites the *Qur'an* silently. All prayers must be said in the Arabic language regardless of one's native language. Therefore, a Muslim must memorize some portions or a few chapters of the *Qur'an* in order to fulfill this requirement. Supplication, an act of petitioning God for favor (*du'a*), can be said in any language. *Salat* can be performed anywhere as long as the place is clean. *Salat* also can be offered individually at home or at the mosque in congregation. Of course, performing it together at home or at the mosque in congregation is preferable. When Muslims pray together, an Imam leads. The Imam must be strictly followed in anything that he does during the prayer. Any Muslim may lead the prayer as long as he can recite the *Qur'an* correctly. An Imam is not an ordained clergyman. His members select him primarily due to his knowledge of religion and his piety.

Every Muslim is required to pray five times daily. This begins as early as age thirteen. Muslims teach their children to pray as early as age seven and reprimand them at ten for their failure to perform prayer. This is just training because they are not obligated to pray until they reach the age of maturity. The only people exempted from prayer all the time are women during their monthly periods or any other Muslim (male or female) who has mental derangement. A Muslim who cannot

72 . Suzanne Haneef, p. 45.

73 . Ayoub, *Islam: Faith and Practice*, p. 120.

74 . *Ibid.*, p. 43.

pray standing may pray sitting or lying on his back. If he cannot bend his neck, he is allowed to nod his head to represent the movements of prayer. This means that he must pray every day by any means. Islamic prayer knows no vacation. It is a commitment. Unfortunately, not all Muslims adhere to it due to personal laziness. Nonetheless, the majority of Muslims strongly believe that life without daily prayer "is a life unfulfilled, severed from its eternal source, *Allah*."⁷⁵ *Salat* is an absolute commandment from God. Neglecting it constitutes a sin in Islam.

In addition to the daily prayers, Muslim men are required to attend Friday prayer. This is once a week and is always at the mosque. Many Muslims meet at Friday prayer to listen to the sermon, interact with one another and share their happiness and adversity. Women can attend Friday prayer but they are not required to do so.

Zakat: Almsgiving to the Poor

Zakat (almsgiving) is a portion of money or wealth set apart from a Muslim's wealth or earnings to be given to the poor or the needy. God makes it obligatory on all Muslims who possess wealth of any kind, to support those who do not have any at all, or do not have enough. *Zakat* is second in importance to the five daily prayers. Whenever prayer (*salat*) is mentioned in the *Qur'an*, it is often accompanied by a request to pay *Zakat*. It is considered a purification of one's wealth. That is, it wipes clean the hearts of the poor in envy of the rich. A person who takes out what is due in his wealth and gives it to the poor or the needy is contributing and building a Muslim community. A person who does not give to the poor when he is financially capable will be considered greedy because he cares less about others than he should. Muslims consider *Zakat* a freedom from greed, selfishness and arrogance. It is also an act of righteousness, a personal and collective commitment to helping the poor, as stated in the *Qur'an* 2:177. Islam considers wealth a blessing from God and that humans are custodians and beneficiaries only. Therefore, those who possess more than what they need to meet their needs have a duty to spend upon those who are less fortunate.

Furthermore, a person who gives *Zakat* should not think that he is truly helping the poor only. In reality, he is helping himself: physically

⁷⁵ Ayoub, p. 120.

by creating and establishing a secure environment or society wherein he can enjoy his little wealth without fear or intimidation. He is helping himself spiritually by ridding his mind of greed and selfishness. An example will make this point clearer.

Assume there are ten people living in a small city. Three of them are rich and seven are poor, for one reason or another. If one of the poor people appeals to wealthy person #1 for help and he fails to support him, the poor man will turn to rich man #2. If he refuses, the poor man will turn to rich man #3. If he is shunned or accused of laziness, or told that he must go and work hard, what would the poor man do? If the poor person is a nice person, he holds on and continues to struggle until he cannot any longer. He would then resort to violence or steal from the community directly or indirectly to secure his basic needs. At this stage, he cares less about the consequences of his actions. His conscience will be telling him that he receives nothing or no support from the community when he behaves well and begs with humility for their support. When he resorts to violence to get his basic needs met, the wealthy people will find their lives in danger and their wealth unsecured, the environment unhealthy, and the fear of instability will spread. Thus, they have to hire more security people, build more prisons to lock up the criminals (the thieves), and do many other things to secure themselves and their environment. All these social evils might have been eliminated, prevented or reduced drastically if these rich people had taken care of the poor by assisting them when they were in dire need or setting up a system for them to improve their financial status.

Muslims claim that giving support to the poor in Islam helps both the rich and the poor, the giver and the receiver simultaneously. It cleanses the community from social evils and enables its members to live together with harmony, love, and care for the less privileged of the society. *Zakat* binds human beings together, the rich and the poor. The Prophet Muhammad said in one *Hadith*, "Men are like the organs of a body. When an organ suffers, the whole body responds to repel the cause of suffering." That is, when a Muslim or any human being is in need, other Muslims should assist him. Otherwise, they are all going to be affected sooner or later.

Who Gives *Zakat* and Who Receives It?

The Muslim man and woman, young and old, who make a minimum wage (*nisab*) give *Zakat*. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) estimates that a Muslim must have at least \$1300 in US dollars in order to give *Zakat*. The percentage due on such amount is two and one-half percent (2.5%). *Zakat* is due once a year and offered only after one's debt and legitimate obligations have been met. A Muslim who does not make a minimum wage is not required to support the poor because he himself is considered a poor person. Hence, he is eligible to receive *Zakat*. The recipients of *Zakat* are stated in the *Qur'an*.

Alms are for the poor, and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds), for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of God; and for the wayfarer; (thus is it) ordained by God, and God is full of knowledge and wisdom. (*Qur'an* 9:60).

Zakat should be given preferably to Muslims, but non-Muslims can receive it too. It can be used to propagate Islam and for the establishment of Islamic social, educational, and healthcare institutions. Each individual is responsible for estimating the value of his/her property and taking out what is due on it. A Muslim can individually give his *Zakat* to whomever he wants; the state or community leaders can collect it and distribute it to eligible recipients on behalf of individuals. In some Muslim countries, banks help their customers take and distribute their *Zakat*.

Zakat is not due on money alone but also on all properties and accumulated wealth, this includes cash, livestock, crops, houses, cars, equipment, and businesses, visible, movable and immovable properties. By cash we mean raw cash, gold, silver, merchandise used in trade, minerals extracted from ground, or from the sea such as gems, etc. By livestock we mean, oxen, camels, sheep, goats, horses, cows, birds, etc. By crops, it is meant all crops from tilled land, plants, and fruits.⁷⁶ *Zakat* on cash must be paid at the end of the year; on minerals when extracted, on crops when harvested, and on cattle when they reach the age specified by the Prophet. The estate of a deceased is taxable or

zakatable in the same way as is a living person, before any creditor's or heir's claims against it are satisfied.⁷⁷

Zakat is not due on properties that are for personal use like clothes, household furniture, personal books, computers, personal transportation, or a house that one lives in. However, it should be noted that the tax that a Muslim pays in the U.S. to the government (IRS) or to the state, county or municipal councils is not considered *Zakat*. Islam recommends too that *Zakat* be given to poor relatives first before given to outsiders, or to the poor in one's area or city before considering taking it to distant places. The givers should not regard their gifts as a favor to the poor but a duty due because of their wealth. It is a form of worship and therefore must be done with sincerity in order to receive a reward for it from God.

Failure to pay *Zakat* leads a Muslim to two forms of punishment. First, the Islamic state punishes such a person by fining him double what is due from him. If the *Zakat* due on his wealth is \$100.00, he would be fined \$200.00. Historically speaking, the successor of Muhammad, Caliph Abu Bakr, fought those who failed to pay their *Zakat* after Muhammad's death. He forced them to pay because the development of the society depends on the collection of *Zakat*. Second, God promised a severe punishment for those delinquent in their payment of *Zakat*, as is stated in the *Qur'an* 9:34-35 and 3:180.

Oftentimes, people wonder how the payment of two and one-half percent (2½%) of a Muslim's wealth annually can solve the problems of poverty in the Muslim world. First, the eradication of all poverty can never be attained but can be reduced drastically, and the wide gap between the rich and the poor can be bridged so that there will be less tension between the two groups. Secondly, the payment of two and one-half percent is only the minimum requirement. Muslims can pay more than that and when there is a need for more; the Islamic state has the right to ask its citizens to pay more. Certainly, if rich Muslims can commit themselves annually to the payment of 2½%, poverty in the Muslim world will drastically reduce. Of course, not all Muslims are paying their due *Zakat*.

In addition, there are other legitimate means through which the rich can reach out to the poor in Islam. The most important is through

⁷⁷ Isma'il al-Faruqi, *Islam*, p. 27.

voluntary charity known in Islam as "*sadaqah*." The function of *sadaqah* has been vividly stated by Mahmoud Ayoub when he says:

Sadaqah is a way of confirming our truthfulness (*sidaq*) of faith through giving. *Sadaqah* knows no distinction of status, race or even creed. It begins with one's own family and nearest relations, and then extends to the poor, the wayfarer, and even the enemy. *Allah* says: 'They thus give food for love of Him to the destitute, orphan, and captive.' (*Qur'an* 76:8) *Sadaqah* must be given for the pleasure of *Allah* alone and for no other purpose.⁷⁸

Every Muslim can give charity, male or female, old or young. The amount to be given has no limit and can be made at any time, without specification. *Sadaqah* is a general term that includes any act of giving, kindness, hospitality, and doing good deeds. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, a companion of the Prophet, reported that Muhammad enjoined every Muslim to give charity. He was asked how this could apply to one who has nothing, and he replied that he should work with his hands, gain benefit for himself and thereby give charity. He was asked what would happen if a person was unable to work. The Prophet answered that he should help one who is in need by action or word. Asked, what he should do if he did not do that? He replied that he should enjoin good deeds. He was asked what should he do if he did not do that? He replied that he should refrain from doing evil deeds, for that would be charity for him.⁷⁹

While the Prophet encouraged the rich to always share their wealth with the poor, he discouraged Muslims from being beggars. He affirmed that an upper hand that gives is better than the lower hand which receives. Therefore, a Muslim should strive to work and get out of poverty. He should be independent, responsible and contributive to his community's needs. However, the best charity (*sadaqah*) is the one given in secrecy to eliminate the element of arrogance, exhibitionism, and greed.

⁷⁸ Ayoub, p. 113.

⁷⁹ Sayid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, vol. 2, p. xv.

Zakat is both an individual and communal obligation. It instills a sense of communal identity. It is pertinent to mention here that many Muslims in the U.S. do pay their *Zakat* regularly. *Zakat* is utilized mainly for the propagation of Islam, the building of Islamic institutions like mosques, schools, and Islamic centers. Little attention has been given to poor Muslims in the U.S. under the pretext that there are few poor Muslims there. This can only be true if the payers are focusing on their ethnic groups only. Since Islam is a universal religion, a helping hand should be extended to all needy Muslims regardless of their race and religion. In addition, *Zakat* money should not be sent abroad when there are eligible recipients within our community in the U.S. American Muslims are eligible for any *Zakat* collected in the U.S.

Zakat al-Fitr

Besides the annual almsgiving (*Zakat*), Islam requests all Muslims to pay *Zakat al-Fitr*. *Zakat al-Fitr* is the food support given to the poor at the end of fasting during *Ramadan*. It aims at assisting the poor and the needy and helping them rejoice during the Muslim feast (*Eid*). The prerequisite of earning the minimum wage (*nisab*) is not required in *Zakat al-Fitr*. Thus, every Muslim, male or female, old or young, must pay *Zakat al-Fitr* as ordained by the Prophet. For young children, parents pay on their behalf, whether they fast or not. Those who are unable to pay *Zakat al-Fitr* are eligible to receive it. It is recommended that *Zakat al-Fitr* be given from the common local food in the community like wheat, rice, beans, corn, dates, barley, etc.

However, in modern times the majority of Muslim scholars argue and even prefer that money be given instead of foodstuff so that the recipient can satisfy his immediate needs. Although Prophet Muhammad stipulated that *Zakat al-Fitr* be given at the end of *Ramadan*, and preferably a day or two before the feast day (*Eid*), Muslim scholars opine that its early payment, especially within the last ten days of *Ramadan*, is better. Such advance payment will ease its distribution so as to meet the needs of the recipients before the *Id* day. Any *Zakat al-Fitr* paid after the *Eid* prayer is considered a charity (*sadaqah*) only and not *Zakat al-Fitr*, because it defeats the purpose of its giving. The amount to be given in the U.S. is estimated as five pounds of any local

food or its equivalent in dollars, between \$5 to \$10 dollars per person. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet enjoined *Zakat al-Fitr* so that those who observe fasting are purified of their indecency and mistakes, and so that the poor and needy can meet their basic needs of food and clothing. Thus, during the *Eid* festival, everyone will have something to wear and to eat. Muslims share the happiness of *Eid* together. *Zakat al-Fitr* can be given to needy non-Muslims, as well.

Fasting (*Sawm*) in the Month of Ramadan

Fasting in the month of *Ramadan* is the fourth pillar of Islam. Fasting is a total abstinence from drinking, eating, smoking, and having sexual relations from dawn until sunset. This is done for the whole month of *Ramadan*, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. *Ramadan* month is either twenty-nine or thirty days. It falls in all seasons of the year because Muslims follow a lunar calendar, which is ten or eleven days less when compared to the Gregorian calendar. Thus, within the course of thirty-four years, every Muslim will have fasted every day of the year: the short, the long, the hot and the cold days.

Fasting in *Ramadan* was ordained on Muslims in the second year of *hijrah* in 624 C. E. Before that time, Muslims used to fast occasionally as dictated to them by the Prophet but had no specific dates. Then a revelation came to Muhammad explaining what fasting was, who should fast, when it should occur and what its purpose was. God says in the *Qur'an*:

O you who believe, fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint. Fasting for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number should be made up from days later. For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent but he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him and it is better for you that you fast if you only knew. (*Qur'an* 2:183-185)

All healthy adult Muslims, male or female, are required to fast for the entire month of *Ramadan*. Exempted from fasting are children

under age, nursing mothers, travelers, sick people, and women who are pregnant or having their monthly menstruation, and old people who cannot bear the burden of fasting due to the weakness of their body. But even they do not forgo fasting completely. They are expected to make up the missing days after *Ramadan*, and before the next *Ramadan*. However, Islam asks that those who cannot make it up because of chronic sickness, disease or old age feed two poor persons each missed day of the fasting period. Muslim children are encouraged to fast as early as age seven despite the fact that they are not required by Islamic law to fast. Fasting for them is training and many kids like it. Their parents often compensate them for it. In addition, Islam recommends that Muslims take pre-dawn meal (*subur*) every day before they fast to ease the burden of thirst and hunger. Muslims must break their fast immediately after sunset, even before they perform the sunset prayer, *Maghrib*.

Muslim scholars elaborate the purposes of fasting to include the following:

- a) To train Muslims in self-discipline and scrupulous obedience to the commands of God.
- b) To feel compassionate with the hungry people on earth. That is, to know exactly what poor people, especially the hungry, are going through. Imam Hussayn, grandson of the Prophet, was once asked about the purpose of fasting during *Ramadan*. He said:

It is that the rich should feel the pangs of hunger and appreciate what the poor have to endure, and therefore share *Allah's* bounty with them.⁸⁰

- c) To engage in increased devotional activities to develop one's spirituality. *Ramadan* is a month of extra bonuses whereby the reward of Muslim's duties is multiplied by a thousand-fold. As a result, Muslims seize the opportunity to increase their services and worship to God.
- d) Fasting also enables Muslims to modify their behavior and change their habits. Fasting is training for changing one's attitude for the better. This can be accomplished by controlling the tongue, hands, and all other parts of the body. Any Muslim who indulges in bad deeds, such as quarreling, being abusive or using obscenities during *Ramadan*

80 Ayoub, p. 124.

receives no reward for his fasting. Prophet Muhammad has said "There are many Muslims who fast but receive no reward for their fasting except the pain of hunger and thirst." In another *Hadith*, he said "He who does not refrain from obscenity, false speech, and evil actions, *Allah* is not in need of his giving up his food and drink."

Fasting is a shield, so the person who is fasting should avoid obscenity, and should not behave foolishly and imprudently and if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should tell him twice: 'I am fasting.'⁸¹

e) To express gratitude for God's guidance by worshipping Him more and taking care of the less privileged by responding to their needs through sharing. Such sharing creates a sense of belonging, of love, and of brotherhood. Prophet Muhammad was described as most generous in the month of *Ramadan*.⁸²

f) Remembrance of God and seeking His forgiveness for one's sins and mistakes. It is a month of forgiveness.

g) Teaching patience, forbearance, perseverance, and steadfastness during deprivation. That is, if a Muslim can discipline him/herself at least for twelve hours a day for twenty-nine or thirty days, without supervision, then he/she should be able to discipline him/herself in any other areas or aspects of life.

Fasting during *Ramadan* also enables Muslims to refrain from overeating and thus allows the body to rest and regain its energies. It has also been pointed out that the main difference between fasting and dieting is that dieting is to lose weight while fasting is an act of worship and obeying God. Believers fast voluntarily; people diet by choice or by force, as advised by their doctors. Practically speaking, Muslims usually do not lose weight during *Ramadan*. Muslims believe that the human body needs a spiritual cure which fasting provides and nourishes.

During the day in the month of *Ramadan*, a Muslim goes ahead with his normal daily routine work or duty and adds to it devotional acts of remembering God, reciting the *Qur'an*, learning more about Islam, educating others or helping the poor and the needy. At night,

81 These *ahadith* are reported by Imam al-Bukhari in the book of Fasting.

82 Sayid Sabiq, *Fiqh as-Sunnah*, vol. 2, p. 113.

many Muslims go to the mosque and participate in night prayer (*Isha*), which is followed by supplementary prayers (*Tarawih*). This *tarawih* prayer is not obligatory although many Muslims do believe it to be very important. During the prayer, Muslims recite the whole *Qur'an*. Each day, one thirtieth of the *Qur'an* is recited and by the end of *Ramadan* a Muslim is expected to have completed the reading of the entire *Qur'an*. They believe that the *Qur'an* was first revealed to Muhammad in the month of *Ramadan*, and that within this month, the night of power (*laylatul Qadr*) occurs. Muslims all over the world mark this date with celebration, merry making and devotion. They believe that it occurs in one of the odd days of the last ten days of *Ramadan*. Some Muslims go into seclusion (*itikaf*) for the remembrance of God during this period. *Itikaf* is when a person resides in the mosques for one or more days and devotes his time to prayer, meditation and detachment from anything material in the world.

It is important to note that fasting is a hidden worship in that nobody knows with certainty whether one is fasting or not. Whether one drinks or eats secretly, nobody can tell. Only God knows that His servants are actually observing the fast. Thus, only God can give its due reward. It has been stated in one of the *Hadith* that the Prophet said:

All works of the children of Adam are his except fasting. It belongs to Me and I will reward him for it. And I give reward for it as much as I want. (*Hadith* Qudsi, reported by Abu Hurayrah and narrated by Al-Bukhari)

Muslims conclude the month of fasting with a celebration known as *Id al-Fitr*, which occurs on the first day of the month of *Shawwal*, the tenth month of the Islamic calendar. All members of the Muslim community go out, pray together, and join the feast. Before the *Id*, all Muslims are requested to give support to the poor (*Zakat al-Fitr*). The amount to be given is estimated at about five pounds of any common local food or its equivalent in money (about \$5-\$10) per person, as elaborated above. Its purpose is to enable the poor to have food on *Id* day, feel happy, and equal. Many Muslim countries declare *Id* day a national holiday. It lasts for three days during which Muslims exchange greeting cards, gifts, and visits. On the first day of *Id*, Muslims congregate together for a special *Id* prayer and are not permitted to fast.

Besides the fasting in *Ramadan*, Islam urges Muslims to fast at other times of the year. This includes six days of fasting after *Ramadan* in the month of *Shawwal*, the day of *Arafah* for non-pilgrims, three days every month and fasting on Mondays and Thursdays every week for those who can endure it. These are voluntary fasts aimed at the continued spiritual development of the individual. However devout a Muslim is, he is not allowed to fast all the time without a break. Hence, he should not fast on Fridays, except during *Ramadan*, and he should not fast on *Id* days. Finally, *Ramadan* is a month of deprivation but also a month of moral uplifting, spiritual development, a month of commitment to helping others, of sympathizing with the deprived everywhere on earth, and a time of remembrance of God.

Pilgrimage (HAJJ): The Fifth Pillar of Islam

Pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia is the fifth pillar of Islam. With it, a believer completes the minimum requirements of being a Muslim. God makes it a duty for all adult Muslims who can afford it, physically and economically, to perform it once in their lifetime. That is, only one time is necessary, but a Muslim can perform it as many times as he/she wants. God says in the *Qur'an*:

And pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the house is a duty unto *Allah* for mankind, for him who can find a way thither. As for one who disbelieves (let him know that) *Allah* is independent of all creatures. (*Qur'an* 3: 97)

Muslims go to Mecca for pilgrimage to answer the call of Prophet Abraham, which he made when he built the house of God in Mecca 4000 years ago.

And remember when We prepared for Abraham the site of the (sacred) House, (saying): Do not ascribe anything as associate with Me, and sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it and those who stand and those who bow and those who prostrate themselves (there). And proclaim the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to men; they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind

of lean camel coming through deep ravines. (*Qur'an* 22:26-27).

Pilgrimage to Mecca involves a great deal of sacrifice, physically and financially. There is very little physical pleasure in it. As pointed out before, Islam is not a religion of rituals only; it is a religion of faith and action. Pilgrimage to Mecca consists of different actions at different levels with a lot of sacrifice; it requires patience and endurance.

Pilgrimage (*hajj*) was established before Prophet Muhammad. Many Arabs used to visit Mecca and paid their due respect to the House of God, *Ka'aba*. However, when Muhammad conquered Mecca in 630 C. E., he cleansed it of all idols and re-dedicated it solely for the worship of the one true God, *Allah*. He re-institutionalized the practice of running around the House, *Tawaf*, and showed his followers how the pilgrimage must be performed. Thus, he said: "Take from me your *Hajj* rituals." From that time on, pilgrimage became part and parcel of Islam and a symbol of the Muslim international fraternity. Millions of Muslims all over the world prepare and journey to Mecca every year to fulfill this religious requirement. The pilgrimage, without doubt, has become a powerful symbol of the worldwide unity of the Muslim community (*ummah*). At Mecca, *Arafah*, and *Mina*, Muslims of all races, classes, cultures, and nationalities gather to reaffirm and renew their obedience to Almighty God (*Allah*). As pointed out by Isma'il al-Faruqi:

Pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) is the most spectacular and moving religious event anywhere in the world. Certainly, none has attracted so many people (as many as 3 million people in 1995, 1996) consistently and regularly over so many centuries.⁸³

Perhaps *hajj* excels reality in its wonderful way of leveling all distinctions of race, color, and rank. While other religious groups, like Christians, gather together at the Vatican; one can easily recognize who is the Pope and who are the Archbishops from ordinary Christian laymen. The distinction is illustrated by their attire. During Islamic pilgrimage (*hajj*), Muslims are clad in two-sheets, in the same white dress, so that there remains nothing to distinguish the high from the low, the Imam from the laymen, the rich from the poor, and the ruler

83 Isma'il al-Faruqi, *Islam*, p. 34.

from the ruled. All pilgrims stand equal before God and participate in congregational communion with God, the Almighty.

Pilgrimage begins in the heart. All Muslims who intend to perform it begin to save and prepare for it in advance. When the time comes to travel after they have paid their debts and made enough provisions for their families and relatives, their families bade them farewell and pray for them because they may not come back. On reaching the checkpoints (*miqat*), they declare their decision of entering into a *hajj* process. This is the only time in Islam when one's intention (*niyyah*) can be said aloud. This is preceded by a ritual bath (*ghusl*) and followed by putting on two-sheets (*ihram*) of white dress for males. One sheet covers the bottom part of the body, from the hip down, and the other sheet covers the other part of the body from the shoulder down. Men are not allowed to wear a cap or underwear at all. Women can be clad in any type of clothes they want as long as the cloth covers all their body except their faces and hands. Although many women wear white clothes, the color white is not necessary. The dress that is put on at the checkpoint (*miqat*) is called *Ihram*. Putting on *Ihram* creates an atmosphere of peace and spiritualizes the minds of pilgrims. It is the beginning of the sacred journey to God, whereby many things will not be allowed until the pilgrim takes off the *ihram*.

This two-piece seamless garment reduces its wearer to an essential oneness of status, erasing their distinctions based on wealth, education, class, language, and ethnicity. All pilgrims recited at least some of their prayers in Arabic, again demonstrating the religion's unifying power. On the other hand, the female pilgrims wear clothes that are native to their home regions: brightly colored saris from India and Indonesia, flowered prints from central and South Africa, simple gowns from North Africa, sensible suits and dresses from Turkey and Egypt, and so forth. Women may wear a simple, white, *ihram* type of garment, but it may not be like the men's, because it would reveal too much of their upper body and arms. Thus, the male pilgrims through the *ihram* symbolize Islam's unity and egalitarianism, and the women through their great variety of dress

symbolize the diverse and creative character of Islam as a global community of faith.⁸⁴

Immediately after putting on the *ihram*, the pilgrim repeatedly glorifies the name of God by saying the following until he reaches Mecca and begins to run around the House (*Ka'aba*). This recitation is called "*talbiyyah*," which means the answering of the call.

Labbayka, Allahumma Labbayka, .. (I am here O Lord, I answer your call, I am here, O Lord, I answer your call. There is no partner unto you. I am here O Lord, I answer your call. All praise, blessing, and power are due to You. Yours is the entire sovereignty. No one is your partner.

On reaching Mecca, the pilgrim finds the atmosphere filled with piety and godliness. He goes to the *Ka'aba* and begins running around it seven times, starting from the black stone (*hajar al-Aswad*), reciting the *talbiyyah* and other glorifying phrases. This process is known as circumambulation (*tawaf*). Upon finishing, he offers two units of Islamic prayer at Abraham's footstep (*maqam Ibrahim*) and then, if he wants, he drinks from the well of Zamzam. He thus proceeds to a valley within the mosque, runs and jogs between two small hills known as *Safa* and *Marwah* seven times. Upon completion, he shaves his head or takes off a little bit of hair. By so doing, he completes a lesser pilgrimage. He takes off his two-sheets of white and waits until the eighth day of the twelve month of the Islamic calendar, *Zul-Hijjah* before he puts it on again and starts the real process of *Hajj*.

During this waiting period, he prays at the *Ka'aba*, makes another *Tawaf* whenever he wishes, recites the *Qur'an*, and continuously engages in the remembrance of God. He lives in the atmosphere of spirituality while being joined by millions of other Muslims in praising God. Perhaps he has never seen so many people from different nations praying together before and that has a psychic effect on him; while his mental condition is lost in the divine. While in Mecca, he usually visits a number of historical places, which cause him to recollect the victory of the first Muslims over non-Muslims at Mecca. Unfortunately, the Saudi government has demolished most of these historical sites. The worship at the *Ka'aba* at Mecca, as pointed out by Ayoub, is a bridge

84 Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, p. 131.

linking the present moment to ancient history. It links the life of the individual pilgrim to the experience of prophet Ibrahim, who built the *Ka'aba* and instituted the pilgrimage. It reminds Muslims of how Prophet Muhammad regained the House for the worship of God alone. A female pilgrim does the same thing a male pilgrim does, except that she is not required to shave her hair after the completion of the *Hajj* process.

It is pertinent to mention here that by putting on the *Ihram* clothes, a pilgrim enters into a purified stage of devotion and worship and, thus, he is prevented from doing many things until he finishes the *umrah* or the *hajj*. This includes a complete withdrawal from worldly affairs and concentrating on the worshipping of God with sincerity. He refrains totally from having relationship with his spouse, using any perfume, clipping of nails, hunting, engaging in any foul talk or bad deeds. He is required to avoid all indecent thoughts, all evil talk, and all disputes. He must be patient and forgiving. In other words, he gives up many of the amenities and comforts of life, which may hinder an inner spiritual experience. He sacrifices all these to achieve the pleasure of God.

On the eighth day of *Zul-Hijjah*, he puts his two-sheets back on and enters into a spiritual life again. He proceeds to *Mina*, a place between *Arafah* and Mecca. He stays a night there and moves to *Arafah* on the ninth day of *Zul-Hijjah*. At the plain of *Arafah*, he stays from noon until sunset. He prays, worships, recites the Quran, remembers God, and prays for himself, his family and for all Muslims all over the world. There, too, he experiences the underlying unity and equality of a worldwide Muslim community, which transcends national, racial, economic, and political differences. Each pilgrim stands there in supplication to God, leaving every material thing behind him and engaging fully in glorifying God and seeking His blessing and guidance. He becomes aware that his religion is universal; it has no boundary. Everyone stands before God as a human being, who is equal to every other human being. At mount *Arafah*, he sees representatives from all nations of the world. It is the largest group to ever meet on earth, in one place, at one time, regardless of severe weather conditions, and primarily for religious purpose - the worship of God and recognizing Him as "the Lord of all the worlds." They all engage in supplication to Him, repent and affirm their helplessness and total dependency on

Him. They fervently seek His forgiveness and pleasure. All men at *Arafah* are in white cloth and one can hardly differentiate one person from another from afar. Everyone looks alike. The feeling of brotherhood, of connectedness to God prevails, and smiles of accomplishment and fulfillment illuminate each face. Thus, they greet one another by saying: *Hajj mabrur, hajj maqbul*, which means: May your pilgrimage (*hajj*) be accepted or merry pilgrimage. They forget or pretend to forget all the hardship they have encountered in reaching the plain of *Arafah*. No word can express or convey their happiness and feelings.

The most awesome moment of the pilgrimage rites is that of the *wuquf* (standing) on mount *Arafah*. During that moment, history stands still. Life with all its allurements and disappointment, hopes and fears, and achievements and frustrations is left behind as the mammoth crowd stands before *Allah*. In this symbolic act of the last gathering, time meets eternity and the life of the pilgrim, which follows this moment, is a new life. The Prophet, upon whom be peace, declared, 'A man who performs the Hajj returns to his home as though he was created anew, as on the day when his mother gave birth to him.'⁸⁵

At sunset, pilgrims move from *Arafah* to a place called *Muzdalifah*. There they rest, offer sunset and evening prayers, worship God and pick up pebbles to be thrown at *Mina* to Satan, which is symbolized by three big stones. After midnight, they proceed to *Mina*, where tents have been erected for them. There they stay for three or four days. Each day, a pilgrim continues to praise God by repeating the *Talbiyyah* (*Labbayka Allahumma Labbayka*). He throws seven pebbles at each big stone that represents Satan at *Mina*. The stoning symbolizes his rejection of Satan and marks mankind's endless struggle against evil prompting and temptations. He then goes back to Mecca to make *Tawaf* (running around the House of God, *Ka'aba* and *Safa* and *Marwah*) and comes back to *Mina* for sleep. He is expected to sleep two or three days at *Mina*.

⁸⁵ Ayoub, p. 129.

On returning to *Mina*, he may sacrifice a goat, lamb, cow, sheep, or camel for God. This is done in commemorating the practice of Prophet Abraham when he promised to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God. When God saw his sincerity and readiness to fulfill his promise and not madness, as alleged by Denny in his book *Introduction to Islam*, God substituted him with a lamb, which he sacrificed instead.⁸⁶ Because of that incident, Muslims sacrifice animals to God to express their thankfulness to Him. To Muslims, this sacrifice is only symbolic and an expression of righteous obedience to God. It is a sign of willingness to follow the commands of God. After that Muslims eat the meat and give the rest to the poor. God says in the *Qur'an*:

The sacrificial animals we have made for you as among the signs from *Allah*. In them is (much) good for you; then pronounce the name of *Allah* over them as they line up for sacrifice. When they are down on their sides (after slaughter) eat ye thereof, and feed such as (beg not but) live in contentment; and such as beg with due humility. Thus have we made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful. It is not their meat or their blood that reaches *Allah*; it is your piety that reaches Him. He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify *Allah* for His guidance to you, and proclaim the good news to all who do good. (*Qur'an* 22:36-37)

Every Muslim who performs pilgrimage is expected to sacrifice an animal. If he is unable, he fasts for ten days instead: three days during his stay at Mecca, and seven days when he returns home. Since millions of people are sacrificing animals today, the Saudi government has facilitated the process by canning the meat and sending it to Muslim countries where it is needed.

After spending two or three days at *Mina*, where they stay, pray, glorify God, and relate to one another, pilgrims return to Mecca and prepare to go back to their home country or visit Medina, where Prophet Muhammad was buried. Before leaving Mecca, they perform another *tawaf* (the running around the House of God, *Ka'aba*). This is known as farewell *tawaf*. Pilgrimage is worship and an act of devotion.

86 Denny, p. 134.

If it is performed well, it guarantees the remission of all former sins as promised by Muhammad as reported by Imam al-Bukhari in the *Hadith*.

Whoever performs pilgrimage sincerely for *Allah* and in the course of it abstains from sensual and evil acts, he returns home from Mecca as immaculate as a child just born. (Reported by Abu Hurayrah and narrated by Imam al-Bukhari)

Performing pilgrimage leaves an everlasting spiritual impact on the pilgrim. It motivates them to be more committed to Islam and gives them hope that God is always there for them. They return home from Mecca impressed by the atmosphere of fervor, the sense of the presence of God, and the sense of belonging to the Muslim community (*ummah*). In addition, they have witnessed the power of Islam, its universality, whose faithful come from all over the world. Anyone who makes it back home is accorded a warm reception and a high religious status in the community and, at times, given the title of *al-Hajj* or *al-Hajja* as a badge of recognition.

Summary

The idea of justification by faith alone, as preached in Christianity, has no place in Islam. A Muslim must believe in the six articles of faith and put his beliefs into action. Islam places great emphasis on belief and action. One who believes and does not practice, or practices but does not believe, is yet to be a true Muslim in Islamic understanding. These articles of faith are the recognition of God as only one, and that He alone creates all other things. Human beings can have knowledge of God through the angels, who are the servants of God and messengers to the prophets. Muslims believe that God sent various divine books to different nations to guide them to the right path, the path of God. Muslims also believe in life after death. God will resurrect all creatures when the time comes and each human being will be accountable for his/her deeds in the Day of Judgment. He who passes the Judgment will go to heaven, and God will punish he who fails. In addition, a Muslim must believe that God has knowledge of whatever happens in

this world to His creatures. Yet, God endows him with thinking faculty so that he can choose and recognize what is right from what is wrong. If he chooses and does the right thing, God will reward him, and if he chooses the bad thing, God may punish him if he does not repent and seek forgiveness from God.

After believing in the articles of faith, a Muslim must exert effort to practice what he believes. He must not associate any other creature with God or render any worship to other creatures except to God. He must also recognize that God sent his messenger, Prophet Muhammad, to the believers with the *Qur'an*. The next important duty in Islam is the five daily prayers through which a believer expresses his thanks to God for all His blessings and favor on him. He thanks Him in the morning, at noon and afternoon, at sunset and at night. He worships God with humility by prostrating and putting his forehead on the floor to express his nothingness before the Almighty God. In the month of *Ramadan*, he fasts so as to develop his spirituality. He abstains from food, drink, smoking, and sexual practices from dawn until sunset for 29 or 30 days. At the end of the fasting month, he celebrates, thanks God for his spiritual achievements, and shares his joy with other Muslims. At this time too, many Muslims offer charity to the needy and pay their *Zakat*, the poor-due, to the poor as recommended by Islam. Only the rich pay the *Zakat*. The poor are the recipients.

At the end of an Islamic yearly calendar, those Muslims who are financially and physically capable make pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Pilgrimage (*hajj*) marks the reenactment of the history of Prophet Abraham, his son, and his wife in the wilderness of Mecca and how Almighty God bestowed His blessings upon Hajar when she was starving of water to feed her son, Ishmael. At Mecca, Muslims from all over the world interact with one another, share their common concerns and deliberate on the future of Islam. They wear the same clothes, sit together, pray together, shoulder to shoulder, and stand before God as if it is the Day of Judgment. The process of *Hajj* involves all four previous pillars of Islam. It requires a lot of dedication and patience because most of what a Muslim normally does every day is prohibited, especially during the five days of ritual practices at Mecca. Muslims learn great lessons, socially and spiritually, from the

experience of the pilgrimage. It leaves an everlasting image and effect on their memory.

When a believer fulfills these practices, he experiences closeness to God and feels the brotherhood of all Muslims, which he has never had before. For it is at Mecca alone that he can watch 2-3 million people worshipping God at the same time with such seriousness and humility. All of them are glorifying God, seeking His blessings and asking for His forgiveness for their sins and shortcomings. After finishing the pilgrimage, they return home as pure as a newborn child, free of sins, as believed in Islam.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER V

Islam and Its Sources: The Primary and Secondary Sources

The *Qur'an*: The First Source of Islamic Law

The *Qur'an* is the religious textbook of the Muslims. It was revealed in Arabic to Muhammad at Mecca and Medina during the period of his prophethood. Muslims believe that every word in the *Qur'an* is the word of God, transmitted to Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel. Since the *Qur'an* is the word of God, Muslims believe it to be perfect, eternal, and unchangeable. Thus, Muslims have not applied textual or literary criticism to the *Qur'an* as it has been applied to other scriptures, such as Old and New Testaments. They believe that the *Qur'an* is God's words and therefore not subject to human criticism. Muhammad memorized the *Qur'an* and taught it to his disciples. They too memorized and delivered it orally to the next generation.

The word "*Qur'an*" literally means "recitation" in Arabic, i.e., the book that must be recited, chanted, and studied. Muslims call this religious scripture "the book" (*al-Kitab*), "the truth" (*al-Haqq*), and "the guide" (*al-Huda*). It is believed to be the last revealed message of God to human beings. Since God spoke the truth to Muhammad and gave him the last message, God will not speak to any other prophet after him. Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is a universal message to all humanity and consider it to be the primary source of knowledge and guidance for every Muslim of any age.

Qur'an is also believed to be a corrective message and a complement to previous messages sent by God to different nations. Previous messages, the *Qur'an* points out, have been altered and distorted by the disciples of their prophets (*Qur'an* 9:30-31); God sent the *Qur'an* to put things right (*Qur'an* 5:16). The *Qur'an* contains 114 chapters, known as *surats*, and about 6,666 verses, called *ayat*. The disciples of the Prophet, the companions, were the ones who gave names to these chapters. It is mostly arranged according to the length of the chapter (*surat*); it is not arranged according to the topics or dates of revelation. The longest chapter (*surat*) in the *Qur'an* is chapter two (*surat al-Baqarat*), which has 286 verses (*ayat*), and the shortest is chapter 108 (*surat al-Kawthar*); it has three verses (*ayat*).

Muslims consider the *Qur'an* to be divine guidance for all human beings. God created humans, in Islamic conception, to be His vicegerents on earth and He instructed them to live their lives in accordance with His guidance, which He sent through different prophets and messengers. The aims and objectives of the *Qur'an* are to invite human beings to follow the right path and present to humans true guidance so that they may attain success in this life as well as in the next.

The Beginning of the Revelation

Muhammad began to receive the revelation, the *Qur'an*, on Mount *Thaur* in Mecca during the month of *Ramadan* as he was meditating. Muhammad reported that while on the mountain, an angel (Gabriel) came to him and asked him to recite. He responded that he did not know how to recite. The angel commanded him a second and a third time to recite. Because of the angel's insistence, Muhammad asked what was to be recited. The answer came forcefully:

Recite in the name of Your Lord who created. He created humans from a clot of blood. Recite and Your Lord is most Bountiful. He taught by the pen. He taught humans that which they knew not. (*Qur'an* 96:1-5)

This was the first revelation that Muhammad received from God. It was followed by the declaration that he had been appointed as the

messenger of God to all human beings. Muhammad was frightened to death upon receiving this message. He ran home to his wife, Khadijah, who assured him that God would not deceive him. Muhammad continued to receive the message and hence delivered it to his few disciples in Mecca; they memorized it and applied it to their daily lives. The *Qur'an* was revealed in pieces, not all at once, to ease the difficulty of its memorization and understanding. The period of revelation lasted for nearly twenty-three years: twelve years, five months and thirteen days at Mecca; the remaining period of revelation occurred in Medina. The *Qur'an* was revealed in some cases as a response to events that were happening in the community, whether in Mecca or Medina, or as injunctions of what the new Muslim community should or should not do. The *Qur'an* focuses on its primary goals: the bringing of human beings back to God; the realization of one Reality (God); removal of misunderstanding and misconceptions about this one Reality; warning human beings about the consequences of their wrong deeds and attitudes; and an invitation to the right path of God.

Some verses were revealed to Muhammad in Mecca while others were revealed in Medina. Those revealed in Mecca are called *Makki*. They were expressed in short and concise sentences and were couched in very fluent and effective Arabic to suit the tastes of the Quraysh, Muhammad's tribe, who was Muhammad's first audience.⁸⁷ The chapters revealed at Mecca (*Makki* surats) dealt with God's unity (*tawhid*), the necessity of Muhammad's prophethood, the belief in resurrection, the Day of Judgment, and an invitation to Islam. These early revelations touched the hearts of the Arabs because of their great appreciation for linguistic beauty and style, which led some of them to believe in Muhammad. They believed that the *Qur'an* could not be the composition of Muhammad, whom they knew to be unlettered.⁸⁸ As the community of believers grew, the style and approach of the *Qur'an* also changed due to the changes in its audience.

The revelation at Mecca was intimately related to the life of the Muslims and the Quraysh. Knowing that a verse or verses were revealed in Mecca enabled Muslims to put the verses into their historical context,

helped them determine the chronology of events and the stages that Islam went through in its early days. Muhammad stayed in Mecca for thirteen years during which time he preached and warned the Quraysh of the consequences of their disbelief in God. Nevertheless, he had few followers in Mecca. These few became his devout disciples, the bearers of his message after his death.

The chapters (*surats*) that were revealed in Medina are known as *Madani*. They bore a different tone, style and language. The audience, too, was different. In Medina, there were Muslims, Jews and Bedouin Arabs and the revelation was addressed to all of them. As a result, some of the verses were couched in the fiery rhetoric of a warner (*mundhir*) and others in the form of laws. The *Madani* verses were long; they embodied most of the detailed Islamic legislation. The audience in Medina was encouraged and invited to act and organize themselves as a community under the leadership of Muhammad. Many verses were repeated to emphasize their importance or until their meanings were fully understood. Some verses were revealed as responses to specific problems and questions asked by individual Muslims. The answers suited the requirements of the new movement in Medina and appealed to the emotions of believers as they went through new stages of life. Muhammad dealt with different kinds of situations at Medina as Muslims became the majority. They were in charge of social, economic and political affairs, and thus the message had to respond to all the new issues and problems encountered as a new community.

The division of the chapters (*surats*) into *Makki* and *Madani* was the work of the companions and the scholars. It was designed to ease the interpretation and understanding of the text. Knowledge of the history and the causes of revelation (*Asbab al-Nuzul*) are also central to any real comprehension of the *Qur'an* itself, for they enable succeeding generations of Muslims "to know the time in which a particular verse was revealed, the circumstances that brought it about, and the real situations it had addressed."⁸⁹

87 Abu Ala Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an* (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1967), vol. 1:15.

88 "Unlettered" is a word used to describe Muhammad that he could not read or write. Muslims avoid the use of the word "illiterate" for Muhammad.

89 Isma'il R. al-Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1986), p. 240.

The Content and Subject Matter of the *Qur'an*

The *Qur'an* is a book of guidance and a principal foundation for all aspects of Muslims' daily lives. It is to be used at all times and in any age. Its message is universal. It discusses numerous issues pertaining to human nature; in fact its primary subject is mankind. It contains principles of religion and ethics as well as prescriptive legislation for everyday life. The *Qur'an* discusses those aspects of human life that lead to success or failure. It explains who God is and how He should be conceived, respected, worshipped and loved. It narrates the stories of the previous messengers of God, the history of past nations and civilizations- how they emerged, what happened to them when they believed in God and what punishment awaited those who disbelieved in Him. However, God is portrayed in the *Qur'an* as merciful and just and not an angry God.

The *Qur'an* also teaches human beings how they should relate to one another, explains what their duties and responsibilities are toward one another, and how they can live a successful life. It warns them about the consequences of doing evil deeds and, finally, invites them to the right path. It emphasizes that all creatures are subservient to God and therefore all should recognize Him as the only Reality that deserves worshipping. Human beings, the *Qur'an* teaches, are God's representatives on earth. Human's responsibility, then, is to implement the will of God on earth and make His rules prevail. The *Qur'an* discusses life, the resurrection, the Day of Judgment, the happiness that true believers will receive, and the severe punishment that awaits non-believers. Above all, the *Qur'an* focuses on principles rather than on details, which are left to believers to determine.

The Islamic revelation relegates to man the task of translating the principles therein into guides and precepts for daily action and living. These guides were designated as *Shari'ah* (law) or *minhaj* (program).⁹⁰

The *Qur'an* is not a book of natural sciences or philosophical theories *per se*, although it discusses these issues in places. The contents (or the verses) of the *Qur'an* are not ordered by subject; neither are they arranged chronologically as they were revealed. The same topic may appear in different places and its meaning may at times be fully understood only when these scattered verses are all put together.

90 Al-Faruqi, pp. 108-9.

Occasionally, discussion of a particular subject may be interrupted. Again, it is we human beings who think that a book must be written in "order." Of course, God does not speak like humans, Muslims argue. Muslims believe that every word in the *Qur'an* is a word of God, revealed to Muhammad through Gabriel, and that the present order of the verses was set by Muhammad, with God's guidance. Therefore, Muslims accept and receive the *Qur'an* as it is, because it is a divine book. Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is the unadulterated record of God directly speaking to all human beings. Believing this is part of submission to God. The *Qur'an*, says al-Faruqi:

... is not developmental, not organic; it does not work itself toward a culmination or conclusion at specific points. Rather, it is composed of a series of clusters of verses, each cluster treating a different topic, but constituting a complete unit even if it is only one or two lines. As a whole, the *Qur'an* is a book without beginning or end. It can be read or recited by beginning at any verse and stopping at any verse. It is infinite, or rather, a window to the infinite, a window through which the reader can peek at the supernal plenum, the infinite space of values and principles constituting the divine will.⁹¹

The Compilation of the *Qur'an*

Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is a sacred text given by God to all human beings. Its message is universal. "Say: O mankind, I am a messenger of God unto all of you" (*Qur'an* 7: 158). Thus, the message must be protected from change, alteration and distortion. God himself, according to Islam, promised that He will protect it. *Qur'an* 15:9 states:

We have, without doubt sent down the message, and
We will assuredly guard it (from corruption). Falsehood
cannot come to it from any direction, neither from the

91 Al-Faruqi, p. 109.

front nor from behind. It is sent down by One full of wisdom, worthy of all praise. (*Qur'an* 41:42)

The *Qur'an* was revealed to Muhammad piece by piece; immediately after he received any message, he would call his scribes to record it. The *Qur'an* was recorded on leather skins, bones, and leaves of date palms, and bark from trees. In addition to this recording, some followers memorized the whole *Qur'an*. Since all Muslims have to read some portion of it in daily prayers, they have to memorize some portion. Many other companions of the Prophet wrote down the *Qur'an* for themselves and the Prophet approved their recordings. By the time the Prophet died in Medina in 632 C. E., many companions had memorized the entire *Qur'an*. By that time, the whole revelation had been recorded but not yet put together in one book. After Muhammad's death, many events pertaining to the composition of the *Qur'an* took place. Some of the companions of the Prophet who had memorized the *Qur'an* were killed in the battles between Muslims and the Quraysh. 'Umar bin al-Khattab, who later became the second Caliph, advised Abu Bakr, the successor to Muhammad, to preserve the *Qur'an* against the danger of loss or distortion. In the beginning, Abu Bakr was reluctant to put the *Qur'an* together in a book because the Prophet himself did not do it. After he was convinced of the wisdom of 'Umar's idea, he selected a committee and appointed Zayd bin Thabit, who was the Prophet's secretary, to head the committee in charge of putting all the *Qur'an* together. Zayd was also in attendance when the Prophet recited the whole *Qur'an* to Gabriel during the last *Ramadan* before Muhammad died. Zayd requested anyone who had written any portion of the *Qur'an* to submit it to the committee. All the collections were cross-checked with what some of the companions had memorized. A final copy was produced and kept with Hafsat, Muhammad's wife. Abu Bakr encouraged Muslims to make copies from this authenticated copy. The *Qur'an* was compiled in the way that the companions heard and memorized it from the Prophet and in the order in which the Prophet recited it. The committee did not follow the chronology of its revelation at all. Where there were different opinions as to some variant readings, the committee followed the dialect of the Quraysh, which was considered the best example and the most classical Arabic then.

As Islam spread, many people converted to it and there was a dire need to teach the people about the *Qur'an*. Hence, during the reign of 'Uthman bin Affan, the third Caliph, several copies were made from the original copy. A copy was sent to each district of the Islamic empire. 'Uthman not only sent a copy, he also sent with it a reciter of the *Qur'an* (*Qari*) to teach the correct recitation. The copy he sent is known today as *Mushaf 'Uthman* (the book of 'Uthman). He ordered that other writings of the *Qur'an* owned by any individuals be burnt so as to remove confusion, and make the *Qur'an* safe from any possible alteration or distortion in the future. His order was adhered to and the companions thus accepted 'Uthman's copy as "the standard" copy. As a result, Muslims claim that there is only one unified copy of the *Qur'an* in existence today in the entire Muslim world. However, the dots, vowels, numbers, names of the *surats* and some diacritical signs found in the *Qur'an* today were added to it later on to simplify its recitation and understanding.

From the time of 'Uthman until today, there has been no new review committee or panel to rewrite or update the *Qur'an*. The literary composition through which the *Qur'an* was revealed is considered the apex of literature in Arabic and, therefore, the *Qur'an* is believed to have kept the Arabic language intact. *Qur'anic* language definitely sets the standard for determining grammatical rules in Arabic. From it, the Arabist derives his grammar, the linguist his morphology, and the poet his forms and figures of speech. Every Arabic writer or essayist, Muslim or non-Muslim, in the past as well at present, tries to imitate the *Qur'anic* quality, style, and form. Muslims all over the world try to: "appropriate it, memorize it, recite its verses, analyze its sentences and grasp its meanings." And they do not stop there.

The Muslims took the revelation in dead earnest. They regarded the *Qur'an* as holy and divine both in its meaning-content and in its language and form. They held it in the highest honor possible. To express their esteem of it, they invented the arts of Arabic calligraphy, manuscript illumination, and book-making, arts that gave to humanity its noblest and richest creations in the visible aesthetics of the word.⁹²

92 Al-Faruqi, p. 102.

The Study, Use, and Understanding of the *Qur'an*

Muslims all over the world take the guidelines of the *Qur'an* as their basic laws. Muslims learn how to read and write the *Qur'an* from the early stages of their lives. They often memorize part of it and recite it in their prayers. Later, they study its meanings for application in their daily life. Those who do not study it thoroughly seek information and advice from those who do know it. There are specialists who spend all their lives studying the *Qur'an* and teaching it to other Muslims. These are known as *Ulama* (Muslim scholars). The method of studying the *Qur'an* differs from one country to another. This study has never been divorced from the learning of the Arabic language. Each country produces the *Qari* or *Hafiz* (one who commits the whole *Qur'an* into memory) and teaches others its proper recitation – this is known as *Tajwid* (the science of recitation of the *Qur'an*). However, Muslims still believe that the best way to learn the *Qur'an* is through a religious teacher who guides the student, especially in the early stage of learning. The *Qur'an* is considered a recited message and that is why many Muslims memorize it. Islam is the only tradition that considers the memorization of sacred literature a meritorious act and an act of worship. Those who memorize it are believed to have a special place in heaven.

Tafsir: the Interpretation of the *Qur'an*

Studying the meanings of the *Qur'an* and its interpretation is called *Tafsir*. This process of interpretation began immediately after the death of Muhammad, when his disciples encountered new issues and faced new problems. As Islam spread and many people converted to it, the need to interpret the *Qur'an* afresh grew, the science of *Tafsir* emerged and Muslim scholars began to write books on it. That process continues until today. Ironically, the numbers of Muslims who learn and actually know the meanings of the *Qur'an* are far fewer than in earlier times. This is due to the low literacy level in the Muslim world today. Efforts have been made here and there to increase the literacy level and some progress has been achieved. Nonetheless, Muslim scholars argue that a true understanding of the *Qur'an* lies heavily on mastering the Arabic language. Without it, no proper understanding of the text can be attained.

Although one can learn the meanings of the *Qur'an* from different translations, many of these translations are inadequate. When one translates, one interprets. Therefore, to grasp the real and authentic meanings of the *Qur'an*, a Muslim is encouraged to learn the classical Arabic language. Of course, no one can understand and appreciate the beauty of Shakespeare's poems and dramas without fluency in English. Trying to understand the real meaning and eloquent message of the *Qur'an* without knowing Arabic is like trying to kiss a bride with wraps over her mouth. Neither the bride nor the bridegroom will enjoy the kissing. Actually, it is wrong to call such a process "*kissing*." The point is that something is missing in trying to understand the *Qur'an* without first knowing the Arabic language.

As to the usage of the *Qur'an*, Muslims consider its recitation a meritorious act, a protection and a blessing. They recite it on different occasions for different purposes. With the words of the *Qur'an*, asserts Mahmoud Ayoub, "Islamic marriages are blessed, agreements are sealed and fear and danger averted. With its recitation both happy and sad occasions are celebrated."⁹³ The *Qur'an* is also used as protection against evil spirits and influences. This usage is most common in Africa and Asia. While the *Qur'an* has been used for these purposes, some Muslim scholars frown on such usage. It is very important to remember that the primary goal of the *Qur'an* is to bring mankind back to God and guide them through a moral and successful life on earth. The *Qur'an* is not a talisman.

The *Qur'an* is a source of Divine blessing and merit, tranquility and guidance. With it a child is greeted at birth, by it he is guided through life's journey to Allah, and with it he is sent to his final abode.⁹⁴

How the *Qur'an* Can Be Understood

Muslims have to understand the *Qur'an* before they can apply its injunctions to their daily lives. Many verses in the *Qur'an* are simple

93 Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *Islam: Faith and Practice* (Markham, Ontario: The Open Press Limited, 1989), p. 88.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

to comprehend while others are complicated. However, Muslim scholars agree that the best way to understand the *Qur'an* is through the *Qur'an* itself. If a reader finds a passage or a phrase or a word in the *Qur'an* which he does not comprehend, he checks the *Qur'an* itself to see whether it has been explained in another verse or verses, for the *Qur'an* explains itself in most cases. At times, a story or an event may be narrated partially at one place but fully illustrated in another place. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the reader to search first for the true meaning of a verse or a phrase in the *Qur'an* itself before resorting to another source for guidance. This method is known as *Tafsir al-Qur'an bil Qur'an*, i.e., the interpretation of the *Qur'an* with the *Qur'an*.

If the reader cannot find any help in the *Qur'an*, he then checks the Prophet's traditions, the *Sunnah*, to see how the verse or verses have been illustrated by the Prophet or by the companions (the *sahabi*), who were the immediate receivers of the message. This is known as *Tafsir bil Ma'thur*, i.e., the interpretation of the *Qur'an* by the tradition, the explanation of the Prophet Muhammad or his immediate disciples. Muhammad was considered the highest authority for understanding the *Qur'an* because it was revealed to him and he was charged with its explanation. After his death, his companions took upon themselves the duty of explaining the *Qur'an* to others. Their interpretations are valid because they were eyewitnesses to the events of the *Qur'an*. Many of the verses were revealed because of them. However, some companions were more knowledgeable than others in the craft of interpreting the *Qur'an*. Reference is often made to the four Caliphs as well as to Ibn Mas'ud and Ibn Abbas as leading scholars in the science of interpreting the *Qur'an*.

When the meaning of any verse remains unclear after checking the *Qur'an* and the Prophet's traditions, then resort is made to the Arabic language and to human reasoning. Since the *Qur'an* was revealed in Arabic, mastering the Arabic language will assist a reader in gaining its meaning better. However, exegesis of the *Qur'an* by the *Qur'an*, wherever possible, according to majority of the Muslim scholars, must take precedent over exegesis through the tradition, whose authenticity and reliability can only be determined via a thorough exercise of human reasoning in sifting out the genuine *Hadith* from the spurious.

Many Western scholars reject the authenticity of the *Qur'an* and its compilation by the immediate followers of Muhammad. They argue that the *Qur'an* was not written down when Muhammad was alive and as such what is claimed to be the *Qur'an* today may not be the whole *Qur'an* or the words of God. They also add that the compilation was not done immediately after Muhammad's death but about two centuries later. Muslim scholars strongly reject these allegations asserting that some of Muhammad's disciples actually recorded whatever Muhammad told them during his life. They argue that some of his followers knew how to write and thus wrote his treaties with Arab leaders. By implication, then, some parts of the *Qur'an* would have been written down when he was alive. They also argue that many Muslims did memorize the *Qur'an* during Muhammad's lifetime. Additionally, the tradition of memorizing and reciting the whole *Qur'an* has never ceased from the time of the Prophet until the present. Muslims believe that the copy of the *Qur'an* in their hands today is the same as the copy of the *Qur'an* that Uthman bin Affan circulated to the Muslims during his reign in 644-656 C. E. Today, millions of Muslims all over the world memorize the whole *Qur'an* and recite it in their daily prayers, especially during the month of fasting in *Ramadan* every year.

Examples of Some Chapters (*Surats*) from the *Qur'an* *Surat al-Fatihat* (The Opening Chapter of the *Qur'an*) Chapter One.

1. In the name of *Allah*, the most Benevolent, the most Merciful.
2. All Praise be to *Allah*.
3. The most Benevolent, the most Merciful.
4. (Lord) King of the Day of Judgment.
5. You alone we worship, and from you alone we seek help.
6. Guide us (O *Allah*) to the straight path.
7. The path of those You have blessed, not of those who have earned Your anger, nor those who have gone astray.

Surat al-Ikhlās (Qur'an 112): Pure Faith

In the name of *Allah*, the most Benevolent, the most Merciful.

1. Say: "He *Allah* is One (the most unique)."
2. God the eternal, the immanently indispensable.
3. He has begotten no one, and is begotten of none.
4. There is no one comparable to Him.

Surat al-Furqan (Chapter 25): The Criterion

In the name of *Allah*, the most Benevolent, the most Merciful.

45. Have you not seen how your Lord lengthens out the shadow? He could have kept it motionless if He liked. Yet, We make the sun its pilot to show the way.
46. Then We draw it back to Us, withdrawing it little by little.
47. It is He who made the night a covering for you, and made sleep for rest, the day for rising.
48. It is He who sends the winds with auspicious news in advance of His benevolence; and We send pure water down from the sky.
49. To quicken a region that was dead, and to give it as drink to animals, We have created and to men in plenty.
50. And We distribute it among them in various ways that they may ponder and reflect; yet most human beings disdain everything but denial and thanklessness.

The Qur'an as a Constitution for Muslims

Muslims hold the *Qur'an* to be their constitution in life. They believe it to be guidance for all human beings. They learn, study, and understand it, and try to follow what it contains as much as they can.

For Muslims throughout the centuries, the messages of the *Qur'an* and the example of the Prophet Muhammad have constituted the formative and enduring foundation of faith and belief. They have served as the basic sources of Islamic law and the reference points for daily life. Muslims today, as in the past, continue to affirm that the *Qur'an* is the literal word of God, the Creator's

immutable guidance for an otherwise transient world. This trans-historical significance is rooted in the belief that the Book and the Prophet provide eternal principles and norms on which Muslim life, both individually and collectively, is to be patterned.⁹⁵

Finally, Muslims who know how to read the *Qur'an* in Arabic do so. Those who do not memorize the whole *Qur'an* will memorize certain portions, particularly the short chapters, and recite them in their daily prayers. Recitation of the *Qur'an* is considered meditative for Muslims. Nowadays, in order to ease recitation of the *Qur'an*, Muslim scholars have provided translation of the Arabic version into many languages. When the *Qur'an* is recited, a sacred atmosphere is created, an atmosphere involving God, the World, truth and peace. There are many variations in *Qur'anic* readings and many Muslim countries have developed their own tones, which are generally accepted by Muslim scholars. When reading the *Qur'an*, Muslims sit in a position resembling the lotus position and put the *Qur'an* in front of them, or on their laps or on a small low table. Some swing back and forth and some sit still. Some put their fingers over their ears and some do not. The reading technique differs from one country to another. It should be pointed out, too, that the *Qur'an* has been translated into many different languages so that its message can reach as many people as possible.⁹⁶ However, the first translation was into Latin in 1143 by an English monk and scholar appointed by the pope, who wanted to understand the *Qur'an*, which he considered to be the scripture of the enemy, the Muslims, who were killed and expelled from Jerusalem during the crusade wars between Muslims and Christians.⁹⁷

Muslims accord the *Qur'an* great respect and pay remarkable attention to its meanings. They consider it a divine message whose recitation links believers with God (*Allah*). *Qur'anic* words are believed to have the ability to ward off evils and bring tranquility (*sakinat*) and peace to believers. Muslims start training their children to recite the

95 John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 36.

96 For more information about the translation of the *Qur'an*, visit: www.quran.org.

97 Tore Kjeilen, *The Koran*, Vers. 1996 - 1997 (June 1998).
Encyclopaedia Oriental. 20 Jun. 1998 <http://l-cias.com/e/o/koran.htm>.

Qur'an and memorize it from an early age and they teach them its meanings as they grow. Muslims recite the *Qur'an* on several occasions: during birth, birth naming ceremony, marriage, inauguration, sickness, funerals, and more. Muslims believe the *Qur'an* to be a miraculous scripture as its words and meanings continue to challenge them. They assume that its words have not been altered since its compilation in the 7th century and this, they claim, bears witness to its authenticity and miraculous nature.

Hadith: The Sayings, Deeds, and Approval of Prophet Muhammad

Hadith is the second foundation upon which Muslims base their religion. Through it, Muslims know what God wants them to and not to do. In Arabic, *Hadith* means conversation, communication and narration. When two persons discuss, their discussion is termed "*muhadathah*," which means conversation. However, in Islamic terminology, the word *Hadith* has been used to convey a specific meaning. It refers to what Muslims believe to have been said, done, and approved by their Prophet Muhammad.⁹⁸ Thus, the *Hadith* consists of information about what the Prophet Muhammad said during his life as a messenger of God, what he did as an exemplary person of what he taught, and what he approved as a Prophet. His approval refers to an act done in his presence while he kept silent. His silence constitutes an approval of such an act because if the act is wrong, Muhammad had the responsibility to correct it by word or by action. If he did not say or do anything, it means the act is allowed. *Hadith* also includes descriptions of Muhammad by his immediate companions, like their description of him as a moderately tall person, or as somebody who cared for others.

Hadith is, at times, referred to as *Sunnah*, the tradition of the Prophet. *Sunnah* literally means a clear and trodden path, a way of doing something, and an established course of conduct, i.e., some custom that has been followed by a particular community or nation generation after generation. To Fazlur Rahman, *Sunnah* was used by pre-Islamic Arabs to refer to "the model behavior established by the forefathers
98 Muhammad Mustafa Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Indiana, Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1977), pp. 1-3.

of a tribe."⁹⁹ When Islam emerged, this model behavior of the tribe was superseded by the model behavior of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims are ordered by God to regard Muhammad as "the real model, the good exemplar." Thus, whatever he did is considered good and correct; whatever he disapproved is perceived wrong and unacceptable. Generally, both *Hadith* and *Sunnah* are used interchangeably. However, at times a sharp distinction is drawn between the two in that the *Hadith* refers only to the sayings, deeds, and tacit approval of the Prophet Muhammad, while the *Sunnah* refers to the actual living practices of the early Muslim community. In that sense, the *Sunnah* includes the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and the practices of his companions, whereas the *Hadith* refers to Muhammad's practices only and excludes the practices of Muhammad's companions.¹⁰⁰ Also, "*Hadith* is a narration of the conduct of the Prophet whereas *Sunnah* is the example of the law that is deduced from it."¹⁰¹ It also should be pointed out that the distinction between the *Hadith* and *Sunnah* is a late development in Islam. To Muslims today, *Hadith* and *Sunnah* are used in the same way, and hardly any difference has been made between the two except in scholarly research.

Further, Muslims believe that they are required to obey God and follow Muhammad, because Muhammad is the Apostle who brought the *Qur'an*, explained it, and applied it. His authority as the interpreter of the message is established in the *Qur'an*. Muslims strongly believe that there is no meaning for accepting Muhammad as the last messenger of God to human beings if believers do not obey his deeds, sayings, and explanations of the message. God says:

O ye who believe, obey God and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. (*Qur'an* 4:59)

99 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* 2ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 44.

100 For more information about the differences between the *hadith* and *Sunnah*, see the following works: Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Pakistan, Karachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research, 1965), pp. 27-84; *Ibid.*, pp. 44-67; Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 40-81.

101 Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991), p. 47.

We sent no messenger save that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission. (*Qur'an* 4: 64)

So, take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you. And fear God, for God is strict in punishment. (*Qur'an* 59:7)

Say: If you do love God, follow me [Muhammad], God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Say: Obey God and His Apostle, but if they turn back, God loveth not those who reject faith. (*Qur'an* 3:31-32)

Muslims believe that Muhammad's authority is derived from the *Qur'an* and is second to the authority of God. His duties as a Prophet lie in explaining the *Qur'an* so that believers will understand it and apply it to their daily lives. Muhammad was also charged with giving instructions on various issues where the *Qur'an* is silent. Therefore, he illustrates the *Qur'an*, applies its rules, and suggests solutions in areas where God does not reveal a concrete answer. For instance, Islam requires each Muslim to pray daily. But how many times should a Muslim pray, at what time, and how should these prayers be conducted? Little information is supplied in the *Qur'an*. Muhammad explained and applied them so that his immediate followers could see the prayer in action. He asked them to pray five times daily and assigned the time of each prayer; he illustrated what is to be said at each stage and what should be done before and after each prayer. He explicated the advantages of prayer and the punishment that awaited a Muslim who deliberately neglects them. Therefore, it will be extremely difficult to obey what God says in the *Qur'an* regarding the prayers without taking into consideration what Muhammad added to those requirements or how he performed them.

Islam also requires every rich Muslim to give some support to the poor. God does not state specifically what percentage should be given, when it should be given or how many times in a year. However, Muhammad, as an illustrator of the *Qur'an*, furnished that information. He stated the percentage that should be given, at least 2.5%, and when it should be given. He designated eligible and non-eligible recipients; he explained the reward for Muslims who fulfill this obligation, and the

punishment that waits whoever neglects his responsibility toward the poor and the needy. Without Muhammad's explanation, this very pillar of Islam cannot be applied adequately. Since Muslims are commanded by God to emulate the Prophet if they are to be successful in this life and the life after, they have to obey him without questioning.

You indeed have, in the Apostle of God, a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in God and the final day, and who engages much in the praise of God. (*Qur'an* 33:21)

The concept that a Muslim only has to obey God and disregard the *Hadith* or the *Sunnah* amounts to disbelief in Islam. A believer cannot be a true Muslim without following the teachings and guidance of the Prophet. Obeying the Prophet is tantamount to obeying God. Muslims believe that rejecting Muhammad's guidelines amounts to rejection of the *Qur'an*. It is like having a fish without water, or a train without rails. The *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* are needed in order to understand and practice Islam properly, for they complement one another.

The Compilation of the *Hadith*

Muslims differentiate between the revelation, which Muhammad received from God, the *Qur'an*, and what he himself said as an illustrator of that revelation. While there is no doubt about the compilation of the *Qur'an* and its authenticity, many scholars disagree as to whether the sayings and deeds of Muhammad were recorded during his lifetime or not. The cause of this disagreement lies in the fact that there are different reports from the Prophet. These reports are confusing, and at times, appear contradictory. Some reports state that the Prophet did not endorse the writing of the *Hadith* so as not to confuse it with the *Qur'an*. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, a companion of the Prophet, quoted Muhammad to have asked anyone who wrote anything other than the *Qur'an* to erase it or destroy it.¹⁰² Muhammad did not want his sayings to be confused with the revelation. On the other hand, Muslim scholars interpret such a statement as a cautionary only. It does not mean that the writing of his sayings and deeds is prohibited, as evidenced from his

102 Azami, pp. 27-31.

endorsement of the writing of his sayings in other reports. In addition, it cannot be conceived that Muhammad lived among his followers for twenty-three years as a Prophet without his followers writing down what he taught them and what they knew about him.

Further, there are many reports that support that the Prophet approved the writing of some *Hadith* when he was alive. At times, the Prophet himself dictated some rules, some interpretations, and some letters to his companions or to the leaders of the Arabs of his time. These letters were sent to different kings in Arabia as well as in Persia at that time. In addition, he dictated the contents of the treaties he made between him and the Jews at Medina in 623 C. E., and between him and the Quraysh at *Hudaybiyyah* in 628 C. E. All these treaties and letters were written down by order of the Prophet. This implies that he was aware of those writings and approved them. However, what was written down during his life was not put together as a book until several decades after his death.

When Muhammad was alive, the companions relied on him for finding solutions to any event that occurred. Muhammad himself relied upon the receipt of revelation from God; in the absence of revelation, he made suggestions, which would be corrected through revelation if he made mistakes. After his death, many issues developed and the companions had no choice but to ask one another how Muhammad settled or solved those issues. If there was no information, then they themselves made suggestions, relying on their understanding of Islam. During Umar bin Abd al-Aziz's reign, he advised scholars to compile reports from the Prophet so as to be a guide for judges and rulers. Before that request, many companions had written some *Hadith* for themselves, but they were not put together as a book of *Hadith*. This is the history of the beginning of the compilation of the *Hadith*.

From that time on, Muslim scholars assumed the task and documented whatever they could about the life, sayings, and deeds of their Prophet. By the end of the second century of Islam, there were many compilations. The reason for compiling large collections of the *Hadith* was to supply the community, where necessary, with information that was considered worthy of preservation. Eventually, some Muslims began to suspect the authenticity of what was attributed to Muhammad. Thus they designed a methodology of sifting good

reports from unreliable reports, and tried to verify and investigate the characters and moral qualities of the reporters to weed out unreliable transmitters. This method later came to be known as the *Science of the Hadith* ('ilm al-*Hadith* or *Usul al-*Hadith**). By the third century, many books were written on *Hadith* and its science.

It is pertinent to mention that the criticism of *Hadith* literature did not begin with Western scholars like Ignaz Goldziher or Joseph Schacht, who advocate the total rejection of all *Hadith*. Rather, Muslims began the science of *Hadith* criticism in the third century of Islam. However, modern critics of *Hadith* argue that since some of these *Hadith* are false, all must be false; since some *Hadith* are projected back to the Prophet to justify some legal opinions, all *Hadith* are fabrications. This line of thought is unacceptable because it is a sweeping generalization which leads to an illogical conclusion. That some *Hadith* are false does not imply that all *Hadith* must be false. Some of these scholars are confused about the *Science of Hadith* because they have no knowledge of it. Critics assume that if modern literary criticism can be applied to the Bible and the Torah, it must also be applied to the *Hadith*. But Muslim scholars on *Hadith* began the criticism of *Hadith* during the third century of Islam.¹⁰³ They themselves rejected a large number of *Hadith* as fabricated. Yet they also accepted many as authentic.

The debate on the authenticity of the *Hadith* has been given great attention by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Muslims search out the traditions of the Prophet to guide the faithful in situations not covered by the *Qur'an*. They claim that it is in the religion of Islam alone that the reports from the Prophet Muhammad were thoroughly checked through their narrators. The scholars verified the characters of these narrators before endorsing and trusting whatever they reported. Even today, reporters give little attention to the characters of those from whom they receive their reports. They are only concerned about what is reported; they care less about the sources of their information. Therefore, there are a lot of inaccurate reports in the media today. And as audience, we tend to believe whatever we're told and hear on the news or T.V.

103 For more information about the criticism of *hadith*, see the works of Ignaz Goldziher, Joseph Schacht, Fazlur Rahman, John Burton, and Muhammad Mustafa Azami.

The Compilation of Books on *Hadith*

Prophet Muhammad was the most beloved person to his companions. His companions memorized his sayings; they emulated his actions and transmitted them to others with pride. Eventually, those who were literate among his followers wrote down whatever they heard from him, discussed it amongst themselves and studied it. After Muhammad's death and the spread of Islam to different areas, Muslims began to collect more of the traditions of their Prophet. These collections were called the "Books of *Hadith*." There are major collections, which are widely circulated and recognized by Muslims. These include the works of eminent scholars like Imam Malik, Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, Ibn Majah, Abu Daud, al-Nasai, al-Tirmizi and others.

Imam Malik bin Anas

The first recognized book on *Hadith* in Islamic history is "*al-Muwatta'i* (*The beaten path*), which Imam Malik bin Anas compiled. Imam Malik was born in Medina in 95 A.H./713 C. E., and died in 179 A.H./795 C. E. He studied in Medina and received his knowledge from the scholars there and a few others who came to visit. He was the founder of the Maliki School of Law. He compiled *al-Muwatta'i* in response to the request of the Caliph Abu Ja'afar al-Mansur, who urged Imam Malik to put together the traditions of the Prophet in order to preserve them. Consequently, Imam Malik wrote *al-Muwatta'i*. Caliph al-Mansur recognized the book and enforced its use in the courts during his reign.

Al-Muwatta'i is a book of *Hadith* and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) simultaneously. It contains about four thousand reports; a few of them are *Hadith* from the Prophet, and most are records of the prevailing traditions and legal opinions of the scholars from Medina. In addition, *al-Muwatta'i* includes discussion on the judiciary system, law procedures, and laws of inheritance, criminal justice, and capital punishment. Its topics and titles are not systematically arranged. Its structure constitutes no inclusive treatment of all related issues on a subject. Nevertheless, this work is one of the earliest writings on *Hadith* literature. Imam Malik was very selective in the choice of *Hadith* that he reported and the

scholars he narrated from. Some scholars have argued that *al-Muwatta'i* is not purely a *Hadith* book. However, it is well received by scholars and is considered a textbook on Islamic law, particularly in the Maliki School of Law in Spain (*Andalus*), North and West Africa.¹⁰⁴

Imam al-Bukhari

He is Muhammad bin Isma'il, Abu Abd *Allah*, bin Ibrahim al-Bukhari. He was born in Bukhara in 194 A.H./810 C. E. His father died when he was young. His mother took care of him and gave him an Islamic education with the money left by his father. He traveled to Mecca, Medina, and many other Islamic learning centers, like Egypt and Persia, to seek knowledge and collect reports from renowned scholars. He spent all his life collecting the *Hadith* of the Prophet and writing them down. Al-Bukhari was known for his piety, intelligence, quick memory, deep knowledge of *Hadith* and its science, and simplicity of lifestyle. He compiled his famous work "*al-Jami' u al-Sahih*- the Sound Collection" in sixteen years. It is a selective collection of the most authentic reports about the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

Al-Bukhari claimed to have memorized more than 600,000 *Hadith* (reports) about the Prophet and affirmed that what he recorded was far less than what he did not record. Muslims consider his collection the most authentic book after the *Qur'an*. This is due to al-Bukhari's great critical ability to sift out authentic *Hadith* from weak *Hadith* and weed out fabricated ones. He continued to edit and rewrite his work to obtain the most scrupulous accuracy. He followed a strict methodology of accepting only the *Hadith* that passed the strict conditions he laid down. He arranged his book according to legal topics and began each chapter with an introduction and commentary where necessary.

The *al-Jami' u al-Sahih* (known as *Sahih al-Bukhari*) contains 9,082 *Hadith*; many of them are repetitions. Most of his contemporaries and the majority of scholars after him rely heavily on his works and methodology, particularly in the criticism of *Hadith*. Of course, none of them surpassed him in quality and clarity. His work, *al-*

104 For more information about the *al-Muwatta'i* and Imam Malik, see Yushau Sodiq, "*Malik's Concept of Maslahah (the Consideration of the Common Good)*," Ph.D. diss., Department of Religion, Temple University, 1991, pp. 77-121.

Jami'u al-Sahih, remains the most widely read and studied book after the *Qur'an* in the Muslim world. Although the majority of scholars wholeheartedly accept all the *Hadith* in *Sahih al-Bukhari* as authentic, some scholars, like as-Suyuti and Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani,¹⁰⁵ argue that al-Bukhari included in his work some *Hadith* that do not measure up to the high standard that he set for himself.¹⁰⁶ Thus, a few *Hadith*, about 110 in number, are perceived as of lesser quality than the rest. Al-Bukhari himself considered them to be authentic. Muslim scholars have written a number of commentaries on *Sahih al-Bukhari*. It has also been translated into many different languages, including English, Urdu, French and Malay.

Imam Muslim bin al-Hajjaj

The second book of *Hadith* that Muslims accept as authentic is *Sahih Muslim*, the compilation of Imam Muslim. His name is Abu Husayn, Muslim bin al-Hajjaj al-Naisaburi. He was born in 204 A.H./ 821 C. E.,¹⁰⁷ and died in 261 A.H./ 875 C. E. He received a formal Islamic education and started the study of *Hadith* when he was young. He traveled widely to learn from renowned scholars in Mecca, Egypt, Syria, and Baghdad. He was also an ardent admirer of Imam al-Bukhari, who had a great impact on him. After he had received *Hadith* from al-Bukhari, he compiled his own work on *Hadith*, which is known as *Sahih Muslim*. Imam Muslim paid much attention to the structure of his book; he prefaced it with an introduction to the science of *Hadith* ('ilm al-*Hadith*). He divided his work into chapters and elaborated on different chains of narrators (*isnad*) through which the *Hadith* has been narrated to give the readers an ample chance to evaluate and investigate the narrators for authenticity and accuracy. *Sahih Muslim* has been recognized as an authentic collection of the traditions of the Prophet. Muslims accept it as equal to *Sahih al-Bukhari* and consider both works the most reliable and authentic books—*Sahihayn*—after

the *Qur'an*. While some scholars argue that there are some differences between al-Bukhari's and Muslim's work, others perceive Muslim's compilation as complementary to al-Bukhari's work. Both are of good quality and authenticity. Nevertheless, *Sahih Muslim* also contains a few reports that do not meet the high standard set up by Imam Muslim himself. This shortcoming does not diminish the great respect that Muslims accord to both books of *Hadith*. They believe that the reports in these books are commentary on and interpretation of the revelation, the *Qur'an*.

Other Compilers of *Hadith*

Besides Imam al-Bukhari's and Muslim's works, there are four other compilations which receive some recognition from Muslims. These compilations are called *Sunan*, which means that the subject matters are characterized according to the tradition prevalent at the time of the Prophet. The narrated traditions are direct quotes from the Prophet with limited reports from the companions on their opinions. The first work of these compilations is *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, compiled by Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman, Ahmad bin Shu'aib bin 'Ali, al-Khurasani. He was born in 215 A.H./ 830 C. E. and died in 303 A.H./ 918 C. E. Al-Nasa'i was very selective in his compilation, yet his book contains some *Hadith* that are considered weak. He explained that he included them to point out the reasons why they were weak and why scholars of *Hadith* rejected their narrators.

The second is *Sunan Abi Dawud*, compiled by Abu Dawud, Sulayman bin al-'Ash'ath as-Sijistani. He was born in 202 A. H./ 817 C. E. and died in 275 A. H./ 889 C. E. in Basra, Iraq. Like the work of al-Nasa'i, Abu Dawud's compilation contains thousands of *Hadith*. Many reports are described as beautiful *Hadith* (*hasan*), while a few others are seen as weak. Abu Dawud argued that a weak *Hadith* is better than the opinions of the early scholars. Thus, both works of Abu Dawud and al-Nasa'i receive less recognition as far as their authenticity is concerned. Nevertheless, many commentaries have been written on these compilations.

The third work is *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, compiled by Muhammad bin 'Isha bin Sawra. He was born in 209 A.H./ 824 C. E. and died in

¹⁰⁵ Both scholars wrote commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

¹⁰⁶ Azami, p. 92.

¹⁰⁷ There are different opinions about the date of his birth. Some said he was born in 202 A. H., while others said he was born in 204 A.H. or 206 A.H./821 AD. For more information, see H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Krammers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1991), p. 417.

279 A.H./ 893 C. E. His work is more comprehensive than the work of Abu Dawud in that at-Tirmidhi includes all kinds of *Hadith* in his collection, and explains the opinions of Muslim jurists on the issues he raises. He also elaborates on the quality of the narrators he quotes, whether they are reliable or unreliable. He also states whether there are other reports by other companions concerning the same subject under discussion. He lays out his methodology in the beginning of his work and adheres to it as much as he can. The *Sunan at-Tirmidhi* contains about 4,000 *Hadith*. Some of them are weak.

The fourth collection is known as *Sunan Ibn Majah*, compiled by Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad bin Yazid ar-Rabi'i. He was born in 209 A. H/ 824 C. E. and died in 273 A.H./ 887 C. E. His collection contains a majority of authentic *Hadith* with a large number of *Hadith* that are weak. Ibn Majah's *Sunan* is ranked the lowest among the six books of *Hadith* because he did not state his methodology in compiling his work. Although other scholars like Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi reported some weak *Hadith*, they pointed out, wherever possible, the *Hadith* which are unreliable and often warned their readers not to accept them. They reported these traditions because many of them were in circulation and occasionally they had been used in legal matters. Ibn Majah did not bother so much to verify those weak reports. Nevertheless, his work is respected to some extent due to its structure. Its chapters and subchapters are well laid out, and its arrangement is coherent. It should be pointed out that the inclusion of weak *Hadith* should not lead the reader to underrate those collections, because, as pointed out by Denny, these weak traditions supply valuable information which cannot be gained in the two authentic sources of al-Bukhari and Muslim.¹⁰⁸ Thus, the *Sunan* are supplementary to the works of al-Bukhari and Muslim. The above books on *Hadith* are not the only compilations; there are many other collections, such as the work of Imam al-Darimi and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal. They are not considered as authentic as the works of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim. Yet, not every *Hadith* in Al-Bukhari or Muslim is authentic.

108 Frederick M. Denny, 2ed, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 165-166.

The Forms and Categories of *Hadith*

Muslim scholars employ two methods to make sure that the *Hadith* attributed to Prophet Muhammad is accurate and connected. These two forms are: the chain of narrators (*isnad*) and the contents of what is reported, the text (*matn*).

Isnad is the art of mentioning the names of those who transmitted the sayings and the deeds of the Prophet from the time he said them to the time of their compilation. For instance, if four persons transmitted any *Hadith*, each one of them has to mention whom he heard or narrated it from to establish the link. If the chain of narrators is broken, or one of the narrators is an unreliable person in terms of his memory or character, the *Hadith* will not be considered a strong *Hadith*. Muslim scholars have also developed the *Science of Narrators* (*ilm al-rijal*), a methodology of evaluating the narrators: their memory, scholarship, piety, truthfulness, and the quality of the teachers from whom they received their knowledge. The time when the usage of *Isnad* began in Islam is debatable.¹⁰⁹

Matn (the second part of the *Hadith*) is the actual text attributed to the Prophet, the content itself. In most cases, reporters quote the verbal words of the Prophet, but occasionally, they render what the Prophet said in their own words. The following narration is an example of a typical report of a *Hadith*.

'Ubayd *Allah* bin Musa told us: Handhahah bin Abi Sufyan related to us, from Ikrimah bin Khalid, from Ibn 'Umar (may *Allah* be pleased with both) who said that the messenger of *Allah*, may the peace of *Allah* be upon him, said: 'Islam is built on five (pillars): testifying that there is no god but *Allah*, and that Muhammad is the messenger of *Allah*, performing the (daily) prayers, paying the poor-due (*Zakat*), making the pilgrimage to the house (*Ka'aba*), and fasting during the month of *Ramadan*.' (Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari).¹¹⁰

109 For more information about the beginning of using *isnad* in *hadith* literature, see Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), pp. 79-81.

110 Ahmad Ali bin Hajar, *Fathul Bari Sharh Sahih al-Imam Abi Abd. Allah Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukhari* 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dar al-Matba'at al-Salafiyah, 1987), vol.

The first part of the above *Hadith* is "the chain of narrators, *isnad*," that is, the reporters who transmitted this saying from the Prophet. There are four names here:

- 1) Ibn Umar, who heard the saying from the Prophet;
- 2) Ikrimah bin Khalid, who heard it from Ibn Umar;
- 3) Handhalah bin Abi Sufyan, who reported it from Ikrimah; and
- 4) 'Ubayd *Allah* bin Musa, who reported that Handhalah narrated the *Hadith* to him.

Another person who wrote this information down was Imam al-Bukhari, who stated that 'Ubayd *Allah* told us (that is, told al-Bukhari and other students) about the *Hadith*.

The second part is the text, the exact content (quotation) of what the Prophet Muhammad said about Islam. According to this report, Muhammad said that Islam is based on five principles:

- 1) *Shahadatayn* - the belief in one God, *Allah*, and that Muhammad is His messenger;
- 2) *Salat* - the establishment of the five daily prayers;
- 3) *Zakat* - almsgiving to the poor;
- 4) *Hajj* - pilgrimage to Mecca; and
- 5) *Sawm* - fasting in the month of *Ramadan*.

As shown in this *Hadith*, these pillars of Islam are not in order. In some other narrations, the pilgrimage to Mecca came as the last pillar of Islam.

The collectors and compilers of *Hadith* pay great attention to the chain of narrators to scrutinize and evaluate their credibility before any report is accepted from them. If any narrator is found to be unreliable or deceptive in his character, his narration will be questioned, and mostly, Muslim scholars will not rely on or accept his report. Due to this evaluation, the quality and authenticity of each *Hadith* depends on how many reliable persons report it. A sound *Hadith* is labeled as *mutawatir*, that is, a *Hadith* that many people who could not agree

together to fabricate lies upon the Prophet. In that sense, numerous narrators who are trustworthy report it. When it is reported by less than a group, or two persons in the time of the companions and thereafter spread and became prevalent, it is labeled "*mash-hur*," that is, well-known tradition, which is famous but less in quality than the *mutawatir*. If one person reports the *Hadith*, then it is called "*Ahad*," an isolated report. A *Hadith* reported by many trustworthy narrators, whose chains of narration are linked to one another is considered an authentic *Hadith*, a sound report (*Hadith sahih*), which must be accepted by believers.

On the other hand, a *Hadith* which was narrated by two persons or a small group of people is considered less in quality and therefore, it is described as "beautiful *Hadith*," that is, *Hadith hasan*. The *Hadith* scholars often accept such narrations as authentic. The last category is the *Hadith* that one person reported. This is known as *Ahad*, a solitary report. Generally, many scholars consider this a weak report (*da'if*) in that they suspect its authenticity. They argue that if the Prophet had said it, it should have been heard by more than one person, and that person would have told another person too. But if it was only one person who heard it from the Prophet, and only one person narrated it from that companion, the *Hadith* scholars are doubtful that the Prophet said it. Nevertheless, some Muslim scholars do recognize that some *Hadith* narrated by one person may at times be authentic and acceptable. It depends on the narrator himself. Is the narrator a reliable person, trustworthy, intelligent, or not? The majority of jurists agreed that a single-narrated *Hadith* might be acceptable provided it was narrated by a trustworthy narrator and was supported by reason. A good example of such *Hadith* is the *Hadith* on intention, which was reported only by 'Umar bin al-Khattab, the second Caliph. Muslim scholars considered it authentic and accepted it even though it was only Umar who reported it from the Prophet, and it was only 'Alqamat bin Waqqas who reported it from Umar.

On the authority of the Commander of the faithful Abu Hafs 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (may *Allah* be pleased with him), who said: I heard the Messenger of *Allah* (the blessings and peace of *Allah* be upon him) say:

Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus he whose migration was for *Allah* and His Messenger, his migration was for *Allah* and His Messenger, and he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take some woman in marriage, his migration was for that for which he migrated. (Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Muslim).¹¹¹

Despite all the attention given by Muslim scholars from the early days of Islam to verify the *Hadith* of the Prophet, there are still some fabricated *Hadith* in circulation today. Muslim scholars try to weed out false *Hadith* and their efforts have been fruitful. With the amount of knowledge and resources available, it is quite possible today for *Hadith* scholars to investigate a *Hadith* and determine whether it is fabricated or sound, a good or weak *Hadith*.

Further, the usage of *isnad* provides good evidence of the quality of a *Hadith*, but does not guarantee the soundness of a *Hadith* all the time. If the content of a text is contrary to reason or to an expressed text of the *Qur'an*, such *Hadith* will not be accepted, regardless of the quality of its chain of narrators (*isnad*). A good example of this is the report from the Prophet in which he is quoted to have said that the most distasteful act (which *Allah* has permitted) is divorce. This means that God allows divorce but He dislikes it. But if God allowed it, then it should not be distasteful to Him. Thus, Muslim jurists agree that the content of this *Hadith* is illogical and therefore conclude that the *Hadith* might have been a weak one. Nowadays many people quote a *Hadith* to support whatever they are claiming. What a serious student should always ask is the source of these *Hadith* and their authenticity. One should not accept any report or saying merely because it is said to be a *Hadith* because not all *Hadith* are authentic.

Finally, there is another type of *Hadith* to which Muslims give great attention. This is known as *Hadith Qudsi*, the *Sacred* or *Divine Saying*. It means what the Prophet reported from God but is not part of the *Qur'an*. The meaning of such a sacred saying stems from God, but the

wording comes from the Prophet himself. Muslims consider the *Qur'an* to be superior to the *sacred sayings* in that Muhammad said them and Muslims couldn't recite them in their daily prayers. If a Muslim denies the contents or meanings of the *sacred sayings*, such repudiation does not amount to disbelief in Islam. Also, while the chain of authorities in an ordinary *Hadith* ends with the Prophet, in the *sacred sayings*, the chain of authorities ends with God. In addition, the subject matter of the *sacred sayings* is not as broad as the subject matter of the *Qur'an* or even of non-sacred *Hadith*. The subject matter of the *sacred sayings* is limited in scope and generally tends to address spiritual and moral issues, and self-dedication to the cause of God.¹¹²

An example of a *sacred saying* is the following report about the Mercy of God in forgiving a sinner as many times as possible as long as the sinner repents and seeks forgiveness from God.

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may *Allah* be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may the blessings and peace of *Allah* be upon him) from among the things he reports from his Lord (mighty and sublime be He), is that he said:

A servant (of *Allah's*) committed a sin and said: O *Allah*, forgive me my sin. And He (glorified and exalted be He) said: my servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for them. Then he sinned again and said: O Lord, forgive me my sin. And He (glorified and exalted be He) said: my servant has committed a sin and has known that he has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for them. Then he sinned again and said: O Lord, forgive me my sin. And He (glorified and exalted be He) said: my servant has committed a sin and has known that he

111 Imam Yahya bin Sharaf al-Din an-Nawawi, *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith: An Anthology of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad*, trans. By Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies. (Plainfield, Indiana: Islamic Book Service, 1991), p. 27.

112 For more information about scholarly discussion of the *Sacred Sayings*, see Graham, William C. Elvine, *Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (Paris: Mouton, The Hague, 1977). See also the introduction to the *Forty Hadith Qudsi*, by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson Davies (Lebanon: Dar al-Koran al-Kareem, 1980).

has a Lord who forgives sins and punishes for sins. Do what you wish, for I have forgiven you.¹¹³

The Consensus (*Ijma'*) of Muslim Jurists

The third source upon which Muslims base their laws is called "*Ijma'*," the consensus. It is one of the four basic principles of Islamic jurisprudence and plays a vital role in the integration of the Muslim community. Its authority derives from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. Literally, *Ijma'* means to bring together, to unite, to assemble, and to congregate. In Islamic jurisprudence, it refers to the agreement of Muslim jurists or scholars in any particular age on a juridical rule.¹¹⁴ That is, a ruling which is based on the unanimous agreement of the Muslim community or scholars on an issue which has not been settled in the *Qur'an* or in the *Sunnah*.

It is also defined as "the agreement of the *mujtahid* (i.e., those who have a right, by virtue of their knowledge, to form a judgment of their own) after the death of Muhammad in any age, on any matter of faith."¹¹⁵ This concept of *Ijma'* has been used "for the systematization of the affairs of the community after a period of chaos, and for upholding the established and agreed practice."¹¹⁶

When the Prophet Muhammad was alive, legislation was based on the revelation received from God and on Muhammad's interpretations of those revelations. After his death, Muslims relied on both the *Qur'an*

and the *Sunnah* for solving novel problems. In the absence of any solution from either source, they depended on their opinions (*ijtihad*). If those opinions were agreed upon, they became acceptable rules, which were later labeled as the consensus of the companions (*Ijma' sahabi*). These rules are assumed to be authoritative and binding upon succeeding generations because they are generally based on and derived from the *Qur'an* or from the *Sunnah*, directly or indirectly. Generally, rejection of what has been accepted as *Ijma'* is tantamount to an act of disbelief, particularly among the Sunni schools of law.

An example of an *Ijma'* upon which there is unanimous agreement among the companions of the Prophet is the case of inheritance. The *Qur'an* states that when a person dies, if he leaves behind his parents, each parent is entitled to one-sixth of his inheritance as indicated in *Qur'an* 4:11. But what will happen if one leaves behind his grandfather or grandmother where the father or mother had died, would the grandfather or grandmother be entitled to one-sixth of the deceased's possessions? This case is not covered in either the *Qur'an* or in the *Sunnah*. Thus, the companions of the Prophet met and decided unanimously that the one-sixth share should be given to the grandparents in the absence of the original parents. Likewise, a grandson is entitled to inherit from his grandfather in the absence of an immediate father. Since then, the allocation of one-sixth of the deceased's property to the grandparents has been an acceptable rule in Islam. The *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* are silent about this issue.

Another example is capital punishment in Islam. If Mr. A is convicted of killing Mr. B by the Islamic court, in a homicide case, Mr. A should be executed. Of course, there are many rules and conditions to be met before the execution takes place. However, the *Qur'an* is silent about the punishment of a group of people who participated in killing one person. Should all participants be killed if they are convicted? This case actually occurred after the death of the Prophet and the companions were puzzled on what to do. Finally, Ali bin Abi Talib suggested that a group should be killed if they all contributed to the killing of one person. The companions met together, deliberated on the issue and finally agreed that Ali's solution be accepted and endorsed. Since that time, Islamic law allows the killing of many people who participated in the killing of one person, provided that they were convicted in the

113 This sacred saying is narrated by Imam Muslim and Imam al-Bukhari. See Imam Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, trans. 'Abdul Hamid Siddiqi (Pakistan, Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1973), vol. 4: 1439, *hadith* # 6,642 in *Kitab al-Tawbat*.

114 Sobhi R. Mahmassani, *Falsafat al-Tashri fi al-Islam* (The Philosophy of Jurisprudence in Islam), trans. Farhat J. Ziadeh (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), pp. 76-78.

115 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Krammers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* 3rd ed. (New York: E. J. Brill, 1991), p. 157. Some Muslim scholars do not limit the scope of Consensus (*Ijma'*) to a matter of faith, rather they extend it to any issue or any matter that concerns Muslims. For more explanation on this topic, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991), pp. 169-172; Abu Zahrah, *Usul al-Fiqh*, p. 198.

116 Ahmad Hasan, *The Doctrine of Ijma' in Islam* (Pakistan, Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1978), p. 16.

court of law. Therefore, the concept of *Ijma'* in Islam is an attempt to finding solution, collectively, to a problem or issue, which has not been addressed in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. *Ijma'* aims to fix issues that had been in dispute, and when fixed, they became an essential part of Islamic legislation for succeeding generations.

The Proof of Consensus (*Ijma'*)

The exponents of *Ijma'* cite a number of verses from the *Qur'an* to justify their position, particularly *Qur'an* 4:115. God says:

Anyone who splits or contends with the messenger after the guidance has been plainly explained to him and follows a way other than that of the believers, We shall leave him in the path that he has chosen and land him in hell. What an evil refuge! (*Qur'an* 4: 115)

The evidence in this verse is that "the way of the believers" refers to their agreement and the way they have chosen. Supporters of *Ijma'* translate this to mean the consensus of the scholars. Thus, adherence to it is binding, while departure from it is not allowed because it amounts to disobeying the Prophet. Nonetheless, some prominent scholars in Islam disagree on the interpretation of this verse. They argue that the verse does not clearly refer to consensus (*Ijma'*) and therefore is not a clear authority for *Ijma'*. To them, the verse refers to those who disobey the Prophet and go against believers and by so doing become unbelievers by renouncing Islam in favor of another religion.¹¹⁷ The exponents of *Ijma'* also quote different *Hadith* to substantiate their view. These *Hadith* include some reports where the Prophet is quoted to have said that his community will never agree on an error; that the support of God will always be with the community.

On the other hand, the opponents of *Ijma'* cite verses from the *Qur'an* to refute the position of the supporters. They argue that the verses quoted by the supporters of *Ijma'* are not directly related to the issue of consensus and, therefore, are not a proof at all. They also refute the *Hadith* quoted by the supporters of *Ijma'* by emphasizing

¹¹⁷ Kamali, pp. 175-181.

that they are isolated *Hadith* (*ahad*), which do not amount to a definite proof, and that many of the *Hadith* are mere encouragement from the Prophet for unity and not that everything they agree upon is right. They themselves quote a *Hadith* where the Prophet said that he left behind two things (sources), which if they hold to them, they will never go astray - the book of God (*Qur'an*) and his traditions (*Sunnah*). That is, Muslims need not look for any other sources of law after the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, and that as long as they adhere to the guidance in both sources they will be guided in all their affairs.¹¹⁸ Despite this strong debate about the consensus (*Ijma'*), Islamic history has shown a number of cases where Muslim scholars resorted to the concept of *Ijma'* to address novel issues that occurred in society and for which the expressed revelation in the *Qur'an* and the tradition of the Prophet provide no solutions.

In our present day, there are many issues that are new to Islam, particularly in genetic/bio-engineering. For instance, is it allowed for a Muslim to sell his blood or any part of his body, like his kidney, lung or eyes? Can he sell it to non-Muslims? Can he himself buy a human part or animal part for use in his body? Can a Muslim donate his body after his death to a hospital for research purposes? What does Islam say about cloning? Practically speaking, all these are new issues upon which Muslim scholars have to deliberate and render their opinions so as to provide guidance for believers. To many non-Muslims, these are not big issues, because each individual has the freedom to do with his life what he wants. To Muslims, they are very important issues and need to be addressed properly, because they have to know whether their acts conform to the dictates of the religion of Islam or not.

While the majority of Muslims recognize the concept of *Ijma'* and admit that some companions applied it, some scholars, in the past and at present, still question the validity and the authority of *Ijma'* and how unanimous agreement can be practically reached on any serious issue, particularly if *Ijma'* is defined as the consensus of the whole Muslim community in a particular generation as held by Muhammad Abduh, the modern Egyptian reformer.¹¹⁹ There are many questions that need to be answered if the concept of *Ijma'* is to be adequately applied today as a means of legislation or a method of creating new

¹¹⁸ Kamali, pp. 180-181.

¹¹⁹ Hasan, p. 247.

rules. These questions include: Can *Ijma'* be conducted today or should it be limited to the *Ijma'* of the companions of the Prophet? Which *Ijma'* is valid? Is it the *Ijma'* of the few scholars or is it the *Ijma'* of the whole members of the Muslim community? If it is the *Ijma'* of the few, how would those few members be elected or appointed; how would they be ascertained? Can the old *Ijma'* be modified to meet the present needs of Muslims; can the new *Ijma'* be subject to change in the future or not? What qualification, if any, should a person hold before being a member of the *Ijma'* committee or is it open to every Muslim? Can women scholars be participants in the *Ijma'*?

While the possibility of applying *Ijma'* today seems difficult, Islamic history has shown that Muslim scholars in the past, particularly during the time of the companions and their followers (the *tabi'un*), had unanimously agreed on many issues which became part and parcel of Islamic law. But as time went on, the concept of *Ijma'* became rigid and static. A process that was initially devised to meet the legal needs of the community, a forward looking and prospective phenomenon devised to settle points that had been in dispute, became a tool of stagnation because of the absence of a machinery for its practical functioning.¹²⁰

However, Fazlur Rahman, an Islamist, suggests that the concept of *Ijma'* should be "an ever-expanding process"¹²¹ through which Islamic law can be expanded, modified, interpreted, and become accommodative to new issues rather than a process of standardization and uniformity among the Muslims. He argues that in the early stages of Islam, *Ijma'* was used as an "informal, natural growth, which at each step, tolerates and indeed, demands fresh and new thought."¹²² Without doubt, *Ijma'* has made a great contribution to the development of Islamic law in meeting the changing needs of the Muslim community. It has been influenced by the opinions of the companions and the jurists in different ages in Islam, primarily in the areas where revelation is absent and where Prophet Muhammad is silent. Nevertheless, opponents of *Ijma'* doubt the effectiveness and applicability of *Ijma'* to reform the

Muslim community. They think it has become purely theoretical and lacks definite practicable machinery to make it function.

Qiyas (Analogy)

The fourth source upon which Islamic law is based is *Qiyas*, translated as "analogy." It is the individual free thought that is based on systematic reasoning, that is, a form of using reasoning in finding a solution to a problem. Muslim scholars resort to *Qiyas* often when new cases occur which were not provided for in the *Qur'an*, in the *Sunnah*, or in the consensus (*Ijma'*). Literally, it means comparing one thing with another or measuring it to see whether it is equal or not. In Islamic law, it refers to an extension of an established rule from an original case to a new case because of the commonality of the effective cause between the two. It is also defined as:

A method whereby the rule contained in a clear text (*nass*) of the *Qur'an* or *Sunnah* or even a rule which has been sanctioned by consensus (*Ijma'* from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*), is extended to [new] cases not explicitly covered by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* on the grounds of a material similarity in the nature of the two cases or by investigating the '*illa* (motives) of the provision in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and identifying the existence of the same motive ('*illa*) in the new case and, thereafter, deciding it similarly.¹²³

Thus, when a problem arises for which neither the *Qur'an* nor the *Sunnah* provide solution, Muslim jurists attempt to find a similar situation in which a rule had been made to compare it to.

For instance, if a Muslim asks a jurist about the legal rule on using or taking marijuana or narcotic drugs, the answer he will get is that it is prohibited, because using marijuana disturbs the brain and causes harm to it due to the intoxicating property in it. But how does a Muslim jurist come to this conclusion of prohibition when the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* do not say anything about marijuana? How does he establish a legal rule (prohibition) on this case? The answer is that the jurist

120 For more discussion on the authority and applicability of *Ijma'*, see Kemal A. Faruki, pp. 152-175.

121 Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History*, p. 6.

122 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

123 Faruki, p. 63.

finds that any intoxicant is prohibited by the revealed texts, *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, because intoxication incapacitates the mind and, by extension, hinders the performance of religious duties. Marijuana shares with wine the attribute of intoxication, an attribute for which prohibition was legislated. Having established that the attribute of intoxication is relevant to both cases, he transfers the legal rule of prohibition from the case of drinking alcohol or wine (the original case) to that of using marijuana or narcotic drugs (a new case). As seen in this example, *Qiyas* is thus the subsuming of a new case under an established rule because of the equivalence of the causes underlying them.

Furthermore, there are four elements which constitute a genuine analogy (*Qiyas*). These are:¹²⁴

- a) The original case (*asl*) which is embedded in the primary sources—the *Qur'an*, *Sunnah* and *Ijma'*. The original case in our example is the case of drinking wine. It has been forbidden in the *Qur'an* 5:93-94.
- b) The new case (*far'*) which requires a legal solution because it is not covered by the provision of the *Qur'an* or *Sunnah*. In our example, it is using and consuming of marijuana or narcotic drugs.
- c) The reason (*'illa*), the attribute or reason common to both the original and the new case.
- d) The legal rule (*hukm*) which is attached to the original case and which, due to the similarity between the two cases, is transferred from the original case to the new case. That is, the transferring of prohibition to the case of using marijuana or narcotic drugs.

The conclusion, since God prohibits the use of wine in an expressed text of the *Qur'an* so as to protect and safeguard the brain and the minds of believers against mal-practices and violence, He would also prohibit the use of marijuana and narcotic drugs because both incapacitate the brain and prevent it from functioning rationally. A person who cannot control his mind is vulnerable to injuring himself and others as well as disobeying God or carrying out his duties properly toward other human beings.

124 Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 83.

The Proof of Analogy (*Qiyas*)

Although the use of *Qiyas* has been widely accepted as a source of law, Muslim jurists differ greatly as to what extent it can be employed in determining legal rules on new cases. The exponents of *Qiyas*, among which are the three founders of the Islamic schools of Law, Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam al-Shafi'i, and others, argue that it is a legitimate source of law which must be employed in finding solutions to new cases that are uncovered in the original sources: the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. Their evidences for accepting *Qiyas* include the following:

- a) The *Qur'anic* verses:

Learn a lesson, O you who have vision to see. (*Qur'an* 59:2)

As for these similitudes, We cite them for human beings but none will grasp their meaning save the wise. (*Qur'an* 29:43)

In these verses, Muslims are encouraged to ponder the similitude given by God and that the appreciation of these parables can only be attained by the evaluation and comparison through analogy.

- b) The *Sunnah*:

The Prophet asked Mu'adh bin Jabal (a companion of the Prophet) when he appointed him as a judge (*qadi*) to Yemen, "On what basis will you judge?" Mu'adh replied, "On the basis of the Book of God." The Prophet asked, "If you don't find your answer there, what will you do?" Mu'adh answered, "I will judge according to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of God." The Prophet asked, "And if you don't find your answer there?" Mu'adh replied, "I will interpret (*ajtahidu*) according to my opinion." The Prophet then patted him on the breast and said, "Praise be to God who has disposed His Messenger's messenger to something with which God's Messenger is pleased. (Reported by Imam al-Tirmidhi)

The *Hadith* indicates the approval of using individual opinion in the absence of provision from the *Qur'an* or the *Sunnah*. Muslim jurists consider this a permission to use *Qiyas* in the absence of an expressed text. They also quote a story whereby a woman from the tribe of Juhaynah came to the Prophet and asked whether she should fulfill the vow that her mother made before she died, which was to perform pilgrimage to Mecca. The Prophet answered in the affirmative and said: "If your mother had passed away with debts outstanding, would you not have settled them?" The woman said she would. Then the Prophet replied: "Repay God's debt for God is more entitled to redemption." Muslim jurists cite this story as an example where the Prophet himself used analogy (*Qiyas*). He likened the fulfillment of the pilgrimage obligation to the fulfillment of an outstanding debt. In both cases, the debts must be paid.

c) The practice of the companions of the Prophet. The expressed text of the *Qur'an* prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages, but it is silent about the punishment of a drunken person who violates this rule. Since there is no solution in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, the companions were faced with this problem after the expansion of Islam. They met and determined the punishment for a drunken person. They concluded that a drunken person should be given eighty lashes. Ali bin Abi Talib, who suggested this solution (which was unanimously agreed upon), used *Qiyas* to reach this verdict. He said:

When one drinks, one gets intoxicated, and when one gets drunk, one raves. When one raves, one accuses falsely. Hence the same penalty must apply to the drunken person as to the false accuser (whose case has been expressed in the *Qur'an* as eighty lashes (*Qur'an* 24:4).¹²⁵

Thus, the drinking of wine is likened to making false accusation.

The exponents of *Qiyas* strongly believe that the use of *Qiyas* is not based on mere personal opinion. It is based on clear cause and well reasoned opinions of jurists and objectives that are compatible with the goals of Islamic law: the prohibition of that which is harmful,

promotion and protection of that which is beneficial to Muslims in this world and in the next.

Those who reject the acceptance of analogy (*Qiyas*) as a source of law, like the *Zahiri* School, Ahmad bin Hanbal, and others, argue that it is based on the mere whims of jurists, for it is not well defined. They insist that the law must be based on certainty, whereas *Qiyas* is primarily speculative and superfluous. It is a guess, a probability, which should not be depended upon as stated in the *Qur'an*: "A guess can never take the place of the truth." (*Qur'an* 53:28). They claim that there is no need for it because the direct and indirect expressed texts of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* cover everything that Muslims need to know legally about their religion. Introducing a new rule through the employment of *Qiyas* is tantamount to adding to the *Qur'an* and suspecting it to be an incomplete book when God himself declared that everything has been explained therein. "And We revealed the Book unto You as an exposition of all things, a guide, a mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims" (*Qur'an* 16:89). And since God neglects nothing in the *Qur'an*, it would be unfair for jurists to add or enact any rule on the basis of analogy. Enacting new rules, which lack *Qur'anic* foundation, will lead to different interpretations and dissention, and this should be avoided.

Despite all these allegations against the use of analogy (*Qiyas*), the majority of Muslim scholars endorse it and affirms its employment by the Prophet himself, his companions, and jurists in nearly all schools of law except the *Zahiri* (literary) school. Permission to use analogy depends on many factors and competent scholars who are capable of discovering the effective cause or the common reason between the old and the new case. *Qiyas* applies only to those areas where the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* are silent. It cannot be used on a case that has a specific reference. However, any ruling arrived at through *Qiyas* is subjective and least self-sustaining. Thus, it is open to reinterpretation, change, and modification as the condition warrants.

There are other secondary sources of Islamic law that jurists use to arrive at a ruling. The acceptance of these sources is questionable in that some scholars recognize them while a few others do not accept them as sources of Islamic law. They include the verdicts of the companions of the Prophet (*qawl al-Sahabi*), the consideration of the common

¹²⁵ Imam Malik bin Anas, *Muwatta' Imam Malik*, trans. Muhammad Rahimuddin (Pakistan, Lahore: Shi. Muhammad Ashraf, 1985), p. 363.

good (*maslahah mursalah*), that is, the permitting or prohibiting of a thing simply because it serves a useful purpose, or meets the need and interest of the public, the custom of the people (*al-adat*), and a few others. Students are encouraged to learn more about these sources on their own since we cannot discuss all of them in this short introduction to *Qiyas*.

Summary

Islam requires its adherents to submit to God, follow His rules and obey the Prophet Muhammad. In order for Muslims to faithfully follow God, they must know exactly what they are required to do and not to do. Thus, Muslims believe that God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad the *Qur'an* to inform believers about Himself and what He wants from them. The *Qur'an* explicates for them all that they need to know about God essentially and how they can relate to Him and do His will on earth if they are to succeed in this life and win salvation in the next world. God sent the *Qur'an*, the manual of guidance, to Muhammad. He in turn explained and interpreted it for his followers. The illustrations provided by Muhammad and the way he himself internalized and applied that revelation is known as *Hadith* or *Sunnah*, the living practices of Muhammad. Both the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* are considered primary sources of Islam. The *Qur'an* was revealed within a period of twenty-three years. Some parts were revealed in Mecca and some in Medina. It was memorized and written down by Muhammad's scribes. However, the companions did not put the *Qur'an* together in a book until after the death of Muhammad, when Islam began to spread to other areas and when those who had memorized it began to die.

The *Qur'an* was not arranged chronologically and the names of the chapters and the vocalization were added to it centuries later. Muslims respect the *Qur'an* and read it every day in their prayers. They regard it as divine guidance for them in all aspects of their lives. The *Qur'an* discusses the unity of God, life after death, and the Day of Judgment. It teaches morals and enjoins good deeds and forbids evil actions. It narrates the stories of past nations and the history of their prophets. The *Qur'an* explains in general the laws that the Muslims should live by.

Muslims regard the *Hadith* or *Sunnah* as the second source of Islam. *Hadith* are the sayings, deeds and approval attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. In the beginning, Muhammad was quoted to have objected to the documentation of his sayings, so as not to confuse them with the *Qur'an*. However, he later approved the recording of *Hadith*, as evidences have shown. His followers reported what they heard from him and what they saw him doing. But, as Islam grew and spread, Muslim problems grew, too. By the second century of Islam, many false reports were attributed to Muhammad. Muslim scholars were suspicious of those narrations. Hence, they developed the science of *Hadith* primarily to check the authenticity of what was attributed to Muhammad. This science of *Hadith* developed into many branches and served the good purpose of scrutinizing the chain of narrators (*Isnad*) and verifying the contents of the *Hadith* itself, the *matn*. A number of scholars took up the task of sifting genuine *Hadith* from the spurious; they compiled the *Hadith* in their collections. The two most accepted and authentic collections are the collections of Imam al-Bukhari, known as *Sahih al-Bukhari*, and the collection of Imam Muslim, known as *Sahih Muslim*. Muslims regard these two books as the most reliable source of knowledge about Islam after the *Qur'an*. Both are widely read and studied in the Muslim world; they are also translated into different languages.

Further, when Muslim scholars could not find a solution to an issue in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, they resorted to the agreed upon opinions of Muslim scholars, who represented the community. This is called "the Consensus-*Ijma*." When Muslim scholars make an agreement on an issue, it is binding for other Muslims to follow, particularly those who live in the area. However, there exists some controversy about the authority of the consensus. Many Muslim jurists recognize *Ijma* and accept it, while a minority of scholars do not approve of it as a source of law, claiming that all that is needed to be known about Islam has been explained in the *Qur'an* and in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Nevertheless, there are many cases where the *Qur'an* gives no answer and about which the Prophet Muhammad is silent. In such cases, the companions of the Prophet met and suggested some solutions, particularly on inheritance and on criminal cases. Their agreement became part and parcel of Islamic law today. Muslim

scholars today can also provide answers to many novel issues, which are not covered in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*.

In addition, one of the sources that has been widely used but still raises a lot of questions is the analogy, the *Qiyas*. It is an extension of an established rule from an original case to a new case because of the similarity of the effective cause ('*illa*') between the two. Some jurists reject it on the ground that it is based on conjecture; it lacks the certainty that is needed in a rule of law. Those scholars who endorse its use insist that *Qiyas* relies on comparison and thorough evaluation, which are based on clear effective cause, common to both original and new cases. Using analogy (*Qiyas*), they argue, is compatible with the goals of Islamic law: prohibition of that which is harmful, promotion and protection of that which is beneficial to Muslims.

These are the sources of Islamic law. The *Qur'an* and *Hadith* are primary sources; the consensus of the community (*Ijma'*) and analogy (*Qiyas*) are considered secondary sources. When a Muslim wishes to know what God wants him to do or not to do, he searches first in the *Qur'an*, then in the *Hadith*. If he does not find any solution therein, he looks into the *Ijma'* and lastly into the analogy (*Qiyas*). If he does not find an answer, he searches in other secondary sources and then uses his own reasoning (*ijtihad*) by taking into consideration the goals, objectives of Islam and its spirit.

Suggested Readings

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CHAPTER VI

ISLAM AND THE LAW (THE SHARI'AH)

The Meaning of Islamic Law (Shari'ah)

Human beings cannot live peacefully with one another without establishing laws to govern their daily affairs. It is with this understanding that Islam sets down rules to regulate the affairs of its adherents. Islam is often subject to strong criticism when its laws are discussed. These laws are perceived to be old and poorly adaptable to the issues that arise in the modern world. Western scholars, particularly, argue that Islamic law fails to meet the needs of the modern age. Muslims on their part reject this inadequate understanding of Islam and argue that Islamic law *can* be applied today and that it can meet the needs of its members because it is flexible enough to accommodate new rules and is capable of providing legal solutions for the new problems that the Muslim world faces. What is Islamic law (Shari'ah) and how does it develop? Is it worth application today despite its condemnation by many people?

Shari'ah is often translated as Islamic law. Shari'ah literally means "the road to the river." The root word "shara'a" means to introduce, to enact, and to prescribe a law. Whenever the term Shari'ah is used, it connotes the law that God has promulgated through His Prophet Muhammad. It represents the totality of God's commandments relating to the activities of human beings apart from those relating to ethics. In other words, Islamic law is:

The canonical law of Islam as put forth in the Koran and the *Sunnah* and elaborated by the analytical principles of the four orthodox schools (*madhhab*, pl. *madhahib*), the Shafi'i, Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki, together with that of the Shi'ites, the Ja'fari.¹²⁶

Muslims believe that Islamic law is the law of God, revealed in the *Qur'an* and explained by the Prophet Muhammad. It is guidance for humanity in all its affairs. Muslims are required to follow this law in order to live peaceful. They believe that as water is the source of life, likewise, following the laws of God, the Shari'ah, is a means of living a peaceful and harmonious life. It also provides Muslims with a profound sense of security and stability.

Basically, Islamic law (Shari'ah) covers two essential aspects of human life: the secular and the religious, the sacred and the profane (*ibadat* and *mu'amalat*). The religious rules (*ibadat*) deal with human's duties towards God, such as religious observance including belief, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca. This area of religious law is not considered important in the West because the practice of one's religion is perceived as a private matter, with which the laws of the state do not interfere. But in Islam, there is no separation between the State and the Church and, therefore, Islamic law covers all aspects of life and prescribes for believers what Muslims should and should not do regarding their relationship with God and with their fellow human beings. The failure to obey God in this religious area may subject one to punishment in this world or in the next world, if one does not repent.

The transactional laws (*mu'amalat*) are the laws pertaining to the material world, such as criminal law, contract law, family law, civil law, property law, and many others.¹²⁷ The general rules governing these laws are mentioned in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims are required to obey these rules as promulgated in the revealed message. They believe that since God creates humans, He knows what is best for them. It is out of love and mercy that God prescribes for them what they should do and what they should not do so as not to go astray.

126 Cyril Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1989), p. 361.

127 Sobhi M. Mahmassani, *Falsafat al-Tashri fi al-Islam* [The Philosophy of Jurisprudence in Islam] (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), p. 10.

Then we put you on the right way of religion. So follow that way, and follow not the desires of those who know not. (*Qur'an* 45:18)

Of course, the execution and interpretation of the laws of God lie in the hands of Muslim jurists (*fugaha'*) and leaders, who are charged with promoting justice and fair dealing in society. The main purpose of Islamic law is the establishment of a just society, the prevention of evil deeds and the protection of all members of society, whether they are Muslim or not, from danger.

The Development of Islamic law

Human beings are by nature evolutionary creatures. They never stop developing. As they develop, their laws change too. Many people think that Islamic law has never changed since it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century. A critical study of the history of Islamic law proves that it has changed drastically at different times due to the expansion of Islam and various needs of the Muslim community. Change is a natural phenomenon and part and parcel of everything. Only God Himself does not change. Yet He revealed different laws to different nations according to their needs. Islamic law has gone through many developments since its advent, and will continue to change to accommodate the ever-growing needs of human beings in different ages. Muslim scholars argue that Islamic law has gone through five major stages of development.

The Period of the Prophet Muhammad

When Muhammad began to receive revelation at Mecca, he was instructed by God to explain the meaning of his message to his followers. Initially, the revelation at this stage (particularly at Mecca), emphasized the belief in the oneness of God, the reality of death, and resurrection on the Day of Judgment. Muhammad affirmed the importance of committing oneself to religion by doing good deeds and forbidding evil acts, and developing moral values, such as trust and fairness. These beliefs and rules are expressed in terms of admonition and warning with no punishment attached to them during the Meccan

period. Muhammad encouraged his followers to apply whatever he taught them and emphasized personal moral development. At that time, there was no Islamic state to implement any Islamic law; Muslims were in the minority then. Muslim scholars label this stage as the stage of "laying the foundation." Muhammad spent thirteen years in Mecca inviting his people to Islam before immigrating to Medina in 622 C. E. to escape persecution by the Quraysh, who had vowed to assassinate him.

The people of Medina gave Muhammad a warm reception and he became the leader of the city as Muslims grew in number. Eventually, he began to regulate the society. He continued to receive revelation, but with a great shift in emphasis towards the social, economic and political spheres of the Muslim community. He introduced new laws regarding the religious aspects of Islam; he explained rules regarding family structure; he elaborated on social economic needs and how each member had to support one another through almsgiving to the poor (*Zakat*); he mentioned what punishment would be inflicted upon anyone who violated family or economic rules. He spelled out the rules that should be maintained between Muslims and non-Muslims and how to deal with one another during both peaceful and war periods. In all these, the all-embracing laws of Islam were carried out by Muhammad himself to set examples for his followers. These precedents were of great value for succeeding generations of Muslims in demonstrating how Islamic laws, as prescribed in the *Qur'an*, were applied to different situations in Medina.

Yet during this period, God and Muhammad were the sole legislators. God would reveal a law, and Muhammad would explain it and add to it what was necessary. The laws were introduced gradually to simplify their acceptance and application. Some rules were modified, generalized, or particularized by Muhammad himself where necessary. Most of the laws in the *Qur'an*, however, were revealed as responses to questions the believers asked.¹²⁸ Prophet Muhammad in this period outlined the principles of actions relating to the rights of God and the

¹²⁸ There are many examples of this in the *Qur'an*. For instance, a person came to Muhammad and asked whether he could marry an idol-worshipper. The answer came that he could not, as stated in *Qur'an* ch 2: 221. Another person came and asked whether he should write down a contract if he borrowed from another. The answer came that he should write any contract down, as stated in ch 2: 282.

rights of human beings.¹²⁹ He laid down major principles of law, which were flexible enough to accommodate the changing needs of time. The details of these laws were later spelled out and fully elaborated by his immediate disciples and scholars of succeeding generations.¹³⁰ With the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 C. E., the revelation ceased. Muslims were left to apply the law as they understood it. They believed that the religion of Islam was complete in that whatever was important to know about Islam had been taught to them by the Prophet. His death marked the end of revelation to human beings.

This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (*Qur'an* 5:3)

The Period of the Companions (*sahaba*) of the Prophet (632-661 C. E)

Islam flourished after the death of Muhammad. It spread to all Arabian peninsulas. As many people began to convert to Islam, new issues emerged. Consequently, Muslims encountered new problems. In this period, the immediate followers of Muhammad were the leaders of the Muslims. Whenever any legal issue was posed, these leaders looked to the *Qur'an* for guidance. If they found any solution therein, they applied it. If not, they searched the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad for guidance; if they found any solution there, they applied it. When both the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* were silent, they assembled, consulted with one another and discussed the issue collectively. They decided which modification could be introduced, if necessary. They discussed the issue until they came to a unanimous opinion (*Ijma'*). Whatever conclusion they reached, the leaders endorsed and applied it.

The *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah*, and the spirit of Islam guided these caliphs in their deliberations on legal issues. They considered themselves the bearers of the message of Islam. Wherever there was a need, they attended to it. At times they modified the *Sunnah* of the Prophet,

129 Whenever Muslim scholars label anything as the rights of God (*huquq Allah*), they are referring to the public rights.

130 Anwar A. Qadri, *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Modern World* (Pakistan, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1981), pp. 43-49.

which they had been privileged to witness. For instance, when Prophet Muhammad was alive, the *Qur'an* put the punishment of illegal intercourse with the opposite sex for an unmarried person to be one hundred lashes.¹³¹ Then the Prophet added that such a person should be exiled for one year so that he/she would not be humiliated and looked upon with contempt in the community or he/she would not spread his immoral attitude through the society. During the reign of 'Umar bin al-Khattab, the second caliph, a person named Ibn Sar was convicted of fornication. He was punished and exiled to another city. Consequently, Ibn Sar converted to Christianity and abandoned Islam. 'Umar was informed of the situation. He called his advisors and sought their advice on what to do. Eventually, they agreed that the punishment of exiling a criminal should be abolished, because it did not serve the purpose for which it was established.¹³² The reign of Umar bin al-Khattab witnessed many changes and modifications to the legal system of Islam. The companions resorted to different methods, particularly *ijtihad* and *Qiyas* (analogy) to align the law with changing times and to the needs of the Muslim community. When they disagreed on any issue due to different interpretations, they followed the views of the majority. Nevertheless, they were always motivated by the spirit of Islam. They tried their best to see that Islamic law was based on a solid legal foundation as it catered to the needs of the community.

The Period of Documentation and Establishment of Legal Theories (661-1258 C. E)

Islamic law went through another stage of development when Mu'awiyah became the leader of the Muslim empire in 661 C. E. Caliph Mu'awiyah turned the Muslim community into an empire with its headquarters in Damascus, Syria. During this period, Muslim scholars initiated the transmission of the *Hadith* of the Prophet

131 "The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication, flog each of them with a hundred stripes. Let not compassion moves you in their case, in a matter prescribed by God, if you believe in God and the last day; and let a party of the believers witness their punishment." (*Qur'an* 24:2)

132 7 Leaders also argued that sending a criminal to another town or community would be wrong for he might spread his crime there, since he would be a stranger in a place where many people would be unaware of his past criminal record.

Muhammad. The companions of the Prophet were scattered in different cities of the empire. Whenever any problem occurred, the scholars in the locale would be consulted for advice. Each region had different solutions to the same problem due to their different opinions. There was no unity. Some Muslims in Baghdad, Iraq, did not recognize the central government in Damascus. Those who followed Mu'awiyyah narrated many *Hadith* in support of whatever the Umayyad empire was doing. Those who went against the empire, the Alids, the followers of Ali, narrated different reports from the Prophet. Each group claimed to possess the true traditions, which represented the true message of Islam.

Islamic law suffered tremendously during this period. The collection of *Hadith* began and both genuine and spurious *Hadith* spread among the scholars. The Umayyad leaders had the chance to do whatever they wanted as they, at times, paid lip service to the true application of Islamic law. The rules followed by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad were not fully followed by the Umayyad's leaders. They established their own rules and applied them in whatever way they decided. Caliphs became legislators. They introduced secular laws based on the customs of the Arabs, relying on the principles of personal judgment (*ijtihad*) rather than the laws established in the *Qur'an*. As a result, some scholars like Imam Shafi'i fought vigorously that the sources of Islamic law be based on the revealed text, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. He limited the understanding of the *Hadith* to only what is attributed to Prophet Muhammad, and not to the customs of the Arabs. He challenged the validity of the actions of the people of Medina (*'amal ahl al-madinah*), which Imam Maliki considered authoritative, arguing that those actions could be wrong. He also disagreed with the school of Kufa, who relied heavily on personal reasoning in deducing rules of law. Islamic law, Imam Shafi'i strongly argued, should be based on the text or its derivatives, and not on personal reasoning, which is fraught with human desires and weaknesses.

Imam Shafi'i won recognition for the *Hadith* of the Prophet as the second source of Islamic law. Umayyad leaders took this period of debate among the scholars as an opportunity to enact and apply whatever laws they wanted. They were far more inclined towards this world than to spiritual or religious issues. Their personal interests and

secular considerations influenced their decisions and policies. At the same time, this period witnessed the beginning of the compilation of the traditions of the Prophet. Muslim scholars began to write books on *Hadith* and on interpretations of the *Qur'an*. Subsequently scholars from different locations emerged and different schools of law were born.

When the Abassid took over the Islamic empire around 750 C. E., in their early period, they displayed more interest in relating their policies to Islamic norms to win people's hearts. The early schools of law developed and different disciplines of Islamic sciences were launched and supported by the Abbasid leaders. Muslim scholars began to write classical books on *Hadith*, exegesis (*Tafsir*), and Islamic law (*Shari'ah*). They paid great attention to education and to all sciences in general. Scholars debated and discussed with other scholars to defend their theories and positions. There was tolerance and accommodation of opposing views. Hence, Islamic sciences were developed, nourished, and patronized by kings and princes.

Unfortunately, this period of development did not last long. Muslim scholars began to divide themselves into different groups, sects, and schools of thought. Each group began to think that its group was the best. Later generations after them, from around 850-1258 C. E., thought that what the scholars had accomplished was the apex of development. They believed that the ideas, theories, and solutions suggested by scholars during this period were the final solutions for all Islamic legal problems and, therefore, they thought they should not be questioned.¹³³ And that was the beginning of the decline of Islamic law in theory as well as in practice.

After this period, the Islamic central government began to lose its grip and power over its constituencies one by one. Many small states emerged, which weakened the strength of the central government in Damascus, Egypt, Spain and Iraq. Consequently, the application of Islamic law suffered and the law became static in that there were no new developments. What had been written was considered adequate to meet the legal needs of the community. Muslim scholars endorsed the imitation of old ideas, old theories and judgments. Muslim kings

133 For more information about the history of the development of Islamic law, see Kemal A. Faruki, *Islamic Jurisprudence* (Pakistan, Lahore: National Book Foundation, 1975), pp. 20-33.

began to disregard Islamic law the more jurists began to protect and preserve what had been written and accomplished before. They felt there was no need to develop new theories or generate new ideas and philosophies if the government was not going to apply them.

Islamic law witnessed no real development between 1258 and 1900 C. E. During this period, Western influence dominated most Muslim countries by means of colonization. Western laws were introduced into the Muslim world and some countries such as Turkey graciously embraced them and rejected Islamic laws, arguing that Islamic laws were old and archaic. Thus, Western laws replaced Islamic laws publicly and officially, and the only areas left to the jurisdiction of Islam and Muslim judges was family law, which was also invaded during the middle quarter of the twentieth century. From the 1950's onward, there have been several voices of Muslim reformers to reapply and reestablish Islamic laws in Muslim countries. Many attempts have been made, but no real success has been achieved due to the alien force of Western codified law, which had and still has a strong grip on and challenge to the Muslim legal system. Muslim scholars in many parts of the world today are calling for the reestablishment and application of Islamic laws. Some countries like Iran, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Malaysia have already begun incorporating some of the Islamic laws into their present legal systems. To what extent these laws will address the legal problems of Muslims in those countries is yet to be seen. However, it must be stated that Western law has never served the needs of Muslims, for it ignores Muslim customs, religion, and ways of life. Hence, Muslims perceive Western laws as alien laws that will not bring them peace or do them justice.

The Sunni Schools of Law and their Founders

As Islam spread to different parts of the Arabia peninsula, a number of notable scholars emerged. These scholars interpreted the laws of God differently due to their understanding of the *Qur'an* and the environments in which they lived. In the attempt to apply the laws of God, which they believed to be universal, they took into consideration the conditions of their locality, the interests of their audience, and the

Islamic knowledge available to them. When the city of Medina was the capital and the only center of Islamic knowledge (during the reign of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman), there was unanimous agreement on many legal problems. But when Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib moved the capital to Iraq, things began to change. When the Umayyad Empire chose Damascus as its headquarters, the center of Islamic knowledge was no longer restricted to Medina, but shifted to Kufa and Damascus due to the migration of some of the knowledgeable companions of the Prophet to those areas to assist the caliphs.

Eventually, new interpretations of the religion of Islam spread. Each locality felt free to abide by the decisions of its local scholars, and thus different schools of law came into existence which, for one reason or the other, leaned towards specific methods of interpretation and application. Each kept in mind the needs of their society. The emergence of these schools can fundamentally be attributed to the inherent flexibility of the principles of law themselves (*Shari'ah*), which allow the law to be suitable and applicable to different people in different places. The Muslim scholars who developed those principles of law did not claim any finality for their opinions or solutions. Rather, they thought that the legal decisions they made were the best solution for their society at that very particular time.

In the third century of Islam there were many different schools of law that emerged. Only a few of them are still in existence today. These include the four Sunni schools and the Shi'ite schools of law. The Sunni schools are: the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools. Major schools of law among the Shi'ites are: the Ja'afari school (also known as Zaydiyyah school), the Isma'ili school, and the Ithna-Ash'aris (the Twelvers) schools. For the purposes of our discussion in this text, we will limit ourselves to considering the four Sunni schools. It should be pointed out that the four Sunni schools are similar in their approaches to the law. One hardly observes any major differences among them in their real application. They follow the same principles, particularly with regard to the *Qur'an*, *Sunnah*, *Ijma'* and *Qiyas*. The followers of each school though vigorously attempt to distinguish themselves from one another, and that has led, sometimes, to confrontation among their followers.

The Hanafi School and Its Founder, Imam Abu Hanifah

The Hanafi school is said to have been founded by Abu Hanifah, Thabit bin Nu'man bin Zuta. He was born in Iraq in 81 A.H. / 700 C. E. There, he grew up and received his knowledge from the local scholars before traveling to Hijaz and learning about the science of *Hadith* from the renowned scholars of Medina. Thus, he was well versed in *Hadith*, contrary to the alleged claim that he had little knowledge of it.¹³⁴ Abu Hanifah could not have been recognized as a great jurist or the father of Islamic law without his having had an in-depth knowledge of the traditions of the Prophet and his companions. Since he was a trader, he did not work for the government. Thus, he was able to express his legal opinions without fear of the established government in Iraq. Abu Hanifah was well known for his piety, generosity, kindness, and ascetism. He had many students, who documented his methods of interpreting the law and his principles of jurisprudence. It was said that Abu Hanifah was the first scholar in Islam to introduce systematic legal thought and a process of deducing legal principles from the text and applying those rules to the practical matters of human life; he made use of reason and analogy to expand them.¹³⁵ Wherever the expressed law failed to serve its purpose, he applied the law of equity (*istihsan*), relying on the spirit of Islam. To him, the *Shari'ah* aims at bringing peace and promoting justice in society.

Abu Hanifah's principles of jurisprudence can be summarized as follows. First, he considered the *Qur'an* the primary source of Islamic law. If he found no answer in it, he looked into the *Sunnah* of the Prophet; if he found no solution there, he investigated the opinions of the companions of the Prophet and chose whatever he wanted. In this, he used his own method of verifying the transmission and reliability of the *Sunnah*. He accepted only the authentic tradition. He was very strict in his selection of *Sunnah*. In the absence of any opinion among the companions, he formed his own opinion based on his personal reasoning, *ijtihad*.¹³⁶ He would not follow the views of the successors (the *tabi'un*); he considered himself to be equal to them. Abu Hanifah

was credited with having introduced the law of equity (*istihsan*) into the legal system of Islam. This legal principle (*istihsan*) was criticized by some Muslim jurists, particularly Imam Shafi'i, on the grounds that its scope cannot be precisely defined. *Istihsan*, Imam Shafi'i argued, is a guess and an arbitrary form of legal reasoning; the law of God should not be based on conjecture or on non-textual supported principle.¹³⁷ Abu Hanifah disagreed.

It is not clear whether Imam Abu Hanifah himself authored any book. But certainly his students wrote many books, which they attributed to him. His school is known as the Hanafi School and it spread all over the Muslim world. This school tends to rely more on *Qur'anic* texts than others. It also gives great emphasis to human reasoning in interpreting, deducting and applying the laws of God. The *Qur'an*, the authentic *Sunnah*, and reasoning (*ma'y*), the school argues, complement one another.

The Maliki School of Law and Its Founder, Imam Malik

The Maliki School of Law is known as the School of Hijaz. It was in Medina that Prophet Muhammad received most of the revelation of the *Qur'an*. Medina became the center of knowledge of the traditions of Prophet Muhammad as well. Muslims from all over the world often visit Medina during the yearly pilgrimage. Many scholars and students stay after the pilgrimage to learn from the renowned scholars of Medina. It was in this city that Imam Malik bin Anas, al-Asbahi was born. His exact birthday is in dispute.¹³⁸ He grew up and received his education there in Medina. He studied under different renowned scholars and never traveled outside except to Mecca during the pilgrimage. Imam Malik was an accomplished man of learning who brought great fame to the city of Medina. He taught many students including Imam Shafi'i, the master architect of Islamic jurisprudence, who strongly believed that any transmission of *Hadith* from Imam Malik was always authentic. Imam Malik was a pious and courageous person; he always expressed his opinions on legal issues without any fear of the authorities, even

134 Noah Ha Him Keller, *The Reliance of the Traveller*, trans. of *Umdat al-Salik* (Il. Evenston: Sunna Books year?), p. 1027.

135 Mahmassani, pp. 19-21.

136 *Ibid.*, p. 20, quoting Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Al-Intiqā' fi Faddā'il ath-Thaluthah*, p. 143.

137 Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, p. 108.

138 Some reports put his birth at 95 or 96 or 98 A. H / 713, 715, 716 C. E. It was agreed upon that he died in 179 A.H / 795 C. E.

if his expressions were to bring some harm to him or subject him to persecution by the Umayyad leaders at Medina.

Like his predecessors and contemporaries at Medina, Imam Malik did not develop what is known today as a theory of law. Primarily, he recognized *Shari'ah* as a divine law with two primary aims: to strengthen one's relationships with God and to establish justice among human beings. All laws should be located in the *Qur'an* and in the explanatory examples of the Prophet Muhammad, the *Sunnah*. When Imam Malik could find no provision for a case in these two sources, he resorted to other sources for guidance. He endorsed, as a source of law, the practice of the people of Medina (*amal abl al-Madinah*),¹³⁹ analogy (*qiyas*), a one-man narrated *Hadith* (*khabar al-Wahid*), and the consideration of the common good of the people (*maslahah mursalah*).

Although he paid great attention to the *Hadith* of the Prophet, he was also very critical of *Hadith* literature. He verified the *Hadith* to determine its authenticity and genuineness before accepting it. His students suggested some reasons why he accepted or rejected a *Hadith*; they found him to be systematic and consistent in his approach. His legal theories were inferred from the books that were attributed to him. At times, he made implicit statements to express preference for a certain source. His acceptance of the practice of the people of Medina and the recognition of the concept of public interest (*maslahah*) as legal theory received sharp criticism from one of his students, Imam Shafi'i, who disagreed completely with him. Imam Shafi'i argued that the practice of the people of Medina should not override an expressed *Sunnah* of the Prophet. The response of the Maliki School is that if the oral tradition was authentic, the companions of the Prophet would have been the first people to practice it. That is, if any tradition was not practiced, then it indicated that the Prophet did not say it or introduce it. Imam Shafi'i also argued that the concept of *maslahah* (the consideration of the public good) cannot be regulated because it is based upon the desire of Muslim scholars. He contended that what is considered to be good for one community may not be good for another community.

139 The principle of accepting the practice of the people of Medina means that when an act is practiced by the people of Medina, it has more validity than oral tradition, which is not practiced. Action speaks loud, Imam Malik would argue.

The law, Imam Shafi'i insisted, should not be based on a theory that cannot be measured or regulated.

Despite all this criticism, it is agreed that Imam Malik wrote a book on *Hadith* that became an authentic source and classical text on Muslim traditions and jurisprudence. That work is known as "*al-Muwatta'*" ("*The Trodden Path*."). It was arranged according to the topics in jurisprudence. Imam Malik spent so many years in writing this book and continuously revised it until he died. The Abassid caliphs, al-Mansur and Haruna al-Rashid, wanted to endorse the use of *al-Muwatta'* in Islamic courts throughout the Abassid Empire, but Imam Malik objected to such enforcement, arguing that there are more Islamic traditions than what he included in his book and, therefore, no one should be forced to use his book. Imam Shafi'i claimed that *al-Muwatta'* is the most authentic book after the *Qur'an*. That assessment may only be said to be true before the compilation of many other authentic books in *Hadith*, like the compilations of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim on *Hadith*.

Imam Malik died in 179 A.H. / 795 C. E. leaving behind his *al-Muwatta'* and some other books on *Hadith*, which were attributed to him by his students. The Maliki School was named after him. This school spread all over the Muslim world: North Africa, West Africa, and Upper Egypt. His *al-Muwatta'* has been used in many *Shari'ah* courts as a source book in Islamic law and has been translated into many languages.

The Shafi'i School of Law and Its Founder, Imam Shafi'i

The Shafi'i School of Law represents the middle path between the Hanafi school, which leans more on reasoning (*na'y*), and the Maliki school, which places more attention on the traditions of the Prophet. The Shafi'i school has been considered the most structured school in that Imam Shafi'i worked out, in concrete terms, the principles and the sources upon which Islamic laws should be based. The Shafi'i School was founded by Imam Shafi'i, Muhammad bin Idris al-Qurashi. He was born in Gaza in 150 A.H. / 767 C. E., the year that Imam Abu Hanifah died. He was first educated by his mother and received his knowledge in Hijaz before traveling to Kufa, Syria, and Egypt. He

showed a keen interest in learning from a young age. On his visit to Medina, he became a student of Imam Malik and accompanied him until he died. He then went to Baghdad in Iraq, where he studied under Muhammad bin Hasan al-Shaybani, a student of Imam Abu Hanifah. By so doing, he acquired the knowledge of the scholars of Iraq and Hijaz, and then weaved them together and established his own school of law. This has given him a prominent position among Muslim jurists of his time.

Imam Shafi'i is recognized as the master architect of Islamic jurisprudence in that he was able to write down, systematically, the sources he relied upon in interpreting, deducing, and applying Islamic law. As he was well versed in the Arabic language, he used that knowledge to explicate the direct and indirect meanings of the *Qur'an* and formulate the principles of the science of abrogation and abrogated verses. He debated thoroughly with his contemporary scholars until the *Hadith* was recognized as the second source of Islamic law; he gave new meaning to the idea of *Hadith*. He insisted that *Hadith* should be limited to what Muhammad said, did, and approved. He affirmed that both the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* are the only primary sources of Islam. All other sources, he argued, are secondary sources and should not be accorded the same importance. Although Imam Shafi'i recognized the consensus of the companions and analogy as sources of Islamic law, he disagreed to some extent with the consensus of the people of Medina. He stated that the deeds of the people of Medina did not represent the views of all scholars in Medina. He also disapproved of the way Iraqi scholars used analogy (*qiyas*) and the concept of equity (*Istihsan*). He considered *Istihsan* to be a guess and an arbitrary judgment with no strong foundation. Therefore, in his opinion, *Istihsan* should not be used as a source of law. The Hanafis disagreed with Imam al-Shafi'i's opinion on *Istihsan*. To them, *Istihsan* is a means of correcting mistakes of the law, especially when its application fails to achieve its objective or contradicts the spirit of Islam.

Imam Shafi'i accorded great respect to his teacher Imam Malik, yet he disagreed with him on several occasions, particularly on the concept of *maslahah mursalah*, the consideration of the public good. Imam Shafi'i argued that only God is the legislator. The law, he insisted, is only that which is expressed in the *Qur'an* or derived from

it. Human's duties are to understand the law and apply it to their daily lives; they should not themselves become legislators. He debated with his opponents and wrote his historical book entitled *A Treatise on the Principle of Islamic Jurisprudence (ar-Risalah)*. Therein, he elaborated his arguments and responded forcefully and with clarity to those who opposed his views. Eventually, he won many disciples and students. His students included Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of law; Daud al-Zahiri, the founder of the Zahirite school; the literalists, and many others. Imam Shafi'i was claimed to have written many books. However, recent research has shown that his students wrote many of the books attributed to him, though they faithfully followed his methodology.¹⁴⁰

Fortunately for him, most of the early Islamic scholars who compiled books on the traditions of the Prophet and on Islamic law belonged to the Shafi'i school, like Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, al-Tirmizi, Ibn Majah, Abu Daud, Ibn Kathir, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, al-Bayhaqi, al-Suyuti, and many others. The Shafi'i school spread all over the Muslim world. Imam Shafi'i regularly revised his views and, therefore, his opinions and verdicts have often been qualified as first opinion or a later opinion. The reason for this was that when he was with Imam Malik, he was not fully exposed to the outside world beyond the Arab peninsula. When he visited Iraq and Egypt, his views changed with his understanding of the reality of life and circumstances he encountered in those areas. Imam Shafi'i died in Cairo in 204 A.H. / 819 C. E. and was buried there. He is quoted to have said that true knowledge is not that which is memorized, but that which benefits the people.

The Hanbali School of Law and Its Founder, Ahmad bin Hanbal

The fourth school of law is the Hanbali School. The Hanbali School is neither called Hijazi, nor the Iraqi School, even though it leans towards the Hijazi School in that Imam Ahmad, the founder,

140 For more information about Imam Shafi'i and his methodology in Islamic jurisprudence, see, Al-Imam Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, *Al-Risala fi Usul al-Fiqh* [Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence], translated with an introduction, notes and appendices by Majid Khadduri, 2ed. (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1987).

laid emphasis on the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad more than on any other sources of law. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 164 A.H. / 780 C. E and died there in 241A.H. / 855 C. E. He grew up in Baghdad, received his knowledge there, and then traveled to many major Islamic cities such as Medina, Mecca, Kufa, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria in search of more knowledge. He was one of the outstanding students of Imam Shafi'i, and never left him until Imam Shafi'i died. It was reported that he respected Imam Shafi'i so much that he would never give any verdict (*fatawa*) when Imam Shafi'i was in Baghdad.

In his legal theories, he leaned towards the supremacy of the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (*Sunnah*) over any other source except the *Qur'an*. He adhered strictly to the text of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. If he found no solution in the traditions, he resorted to the consensus of the scholars, particularly the verdicts (*fatawa*) of the companions, provided there was nothing to contradict them. He did not wholeheartedly support analogy (*Qiyas*) as a source of law, although at times he used it. He preferred a *Hadith*, which was reported by one person (*khbar al-wahid*) to analogy (*qiyas*). Due to his heavy reliance on the *Hadith*, some scholars like Ibn 'Abd al-Barr and al-Tabari did not consider Imam Ahmad a jurist. They recognized him as *muhaddith* (one versed in the *Hadith* traditions).

Imam Ahmad was renowned for his works, particularly his compilation of the traditions of the Prophet, the *Musnad*. This work was arranged according to the names of the narrators. That is, he reported all *Hadith* that was reported by each single narrator from the Prophet. In doing this, he did not follow the method of other jurists in arranging *Hadith* according to the legal topics, as did Imam Malik. It is reported that Imam Ahmad memorized more than one hundred thousand *Hadith* and wrote down only forty thousand, which he rated as authentic. Many scholars argue that Imam Ahmad's collection includes some *Hadith* that are weak as compared to the collection of Imam al-Bukhari or Imam Muslim. However, Imam Ahmad was known to be pious, dedicated, and firm in his faith. He was imprisoned and tortured for twenty-eight months by one of the Abassid caliphs, al-Mu'tasim, because of his view of the *Qur'an*. He gained great fame

for his insistence upon the uncreatedness¹⁴¹ of the *Qur'an* and his steadfastness in the face of persecution. This period is known in Muslim history as the period of inquisition (*mihnah*), whereby all those scholars who did not subscribe to the rationalists' (Mu'tazilite) opinions were punished by the government. The Hanbali School is predominantly followed in present day Saudi Arabia and by some Muslims in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. It is the least widespread of the four Sunni schools. Many Muslims in Africa never hear of the Hanbali School until they travel on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

The Goals and Objectives of Islamic Law

God commands Muslims to follow the laws He revealed to them. By obeying these laws and applying them to their daily lives, they are guaranteed successful and peaceful lives. One of the main objectives of Islamic law is to live a good life and practice justice. In order to achieve this, it encourages good deeds and recommends steps to be taken to eradicate evils in society. Individuals are taught through many injunctions in the *Qur'an* to be good people, who cause no harm to themselves or to others. They should love themselves and harbor no hate against others. They should care for themselves, their families, and for the members of their community.

Further, Islamic law aims at promoting social justice and fair treatment of all members of society. Everyone is considered equal before the law, regardless of his/her status, whether he/she is rich or poor, male or female, Muslim or non-Muslim. Muslim scholars contend that God revealed the law to protect the interests of all mankind. Any law God recommends is beneficial to humans, even if humans cannot realize the advantage immediately. Also, when God prohibits anything, it is believed that what is prohibited is harmful to humans, directly or indirectly.

As-Shatibi, a Muslim legal theorist, argues that the primary objective of the Lawgiver, *Allah*, in establishing Islamic law is to cater to people's present needs and future interests,¹⁴² which are really beneficial. This consists of the preservation of five things: preservation of religion, of

141 This means that the *Qur'an* is not a creation but the words of God revealed to Muhammad within the period of twenty three years.

142 Abu Ibrahim as-Shatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Ahkam*, vol. 2:2.

life and family, of property and wealth, of human intellect, and of human honor. Whatever assures the preservation of these five things is encouraged, and whatever fails to preserve them is perceived as evil that must be removed.¹⁴³ Without their preservation, life will be difficult for many human beings. The mentioning of only five goals does not negate other goals as important, like the preservation of the environment. These are the ultimate ends of Islamic law, and the purpose is to bring believers into the domain of divine law, whereby they comply with what God wants them to do and avoid whatever is prohibited for them.

Furthermore, by preserving the religion, Islamic law protects the individual's freedom to choose whatever religion a person wants, for there is no compulsion in religion. Islam asserts that human beings are by their nature religious beings, and anything that will prevent them from having a relationship with their God is discouraged. It is also through religion that Muslims believe that each person learns about morals and values that are essential to the peaceful co-existence of the members of the community and the stability of any nation. Hence, God establishes religious duties and requires believers to observe them. Failure to observe them may subject a believer to severe punishment in this world and in the next as well.

Islam establishes that human life is sacred and thus no life should be taken without justification. It also emphasizes that killing or taking a life of another unjustly is like killing all human beings. Saving a life is like saving the lives of all human beings. God says in the *Qur'an*:

Nor take life which God has made sacred except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand retaliation or to forgive), but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped (by the law). (*Qur'an* 17:33)

If anyone slew a person (unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land), it would be as if he slew the whole people. And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people. (*Qur'an* 5:35)

143 Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustafa min 'Ilm Usul al-Fiqh*, (Cairo: Matba'at al-Salafiyyah, 1937); vol. 1:286-7.

To this end, Islam introduces criminal laws to preserve the sacredness of human lives and prevent crime in society.

Islam pays great attention to the preservation of human intellect, for it believes that human intellect is actually the source of all good things. Similarly, if not safeguarded, it may be the source of all evils too. Consequently, anything that can cause harm to the human brain or lead it to malfunctioning is prevented, such as drinking alcoholic beverages or consuming any intoxicant. Although one's brain is one's property, Islam believes that the malfunctioning of the brain may affect the individual as well as the community. Therefore, the community has an absolute right to help it function well. A drunkard may cause harm to himself as well as to innocent citizens, such as when he drives under the influence. Islam, as a religion, prevents the occurrence of evils and vices; it does not wait until bad things happen before it enacts a law to regulate or prevent them.

In addition, Islam takes pride in the protection of the family institution, which is the bedrock of Islamic community. It accords great importance to the structure of the family: how to marry, raise children, relate to and respect one another, how to practice justice within the family, how to inherit from one another, how to protect the rights of each individual, and how to live together peacefully as one family. Peaceful family life in Islam is based on love, respect, and mutual understanding. The honor of each individual is respected and should not be tarnished. If anyone accuses another unjustly, Islam has established rules to protect the honor of innocent individuals.

Everyone has the freedom to enjoy the benefits of his/her labor. Islam maintains that no one should tamper with or take or use the property of others without permission. It strongly condemns theft, embezzlement, robbery, extortion, cheating, deception and usurpation. In order to protect the wealth of each individual, Islam introduces a variety of laws to govern the acquisition of wealth and a fair distribution of it. God expressly states in the *Qur'an* that:

And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that you may eat up, wrongfully and knowingly, a little of (other) people's property. (*Qur'an* 2:188)

The above verse mentions that using bribery to corrupt judges and those in authority is prohibited. Wealth is believed in Islam to be a trust (*amanah*) in one's hand and it should be acquired in a lawful manner and be spent in a lawful manner too. Property has its own sacredness. Nevertheless, the rich should give *Zakat* to the poor. Failure to do so would subject the rich to some sort of punishment in Islamic law. There are many rules in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* detailing how wealth should be acquired and distributed, how the rights of employers and employees should be respected and protected.

The preservation of all of the above five things is seen as good for the community, because they serve its best interests. Whatever fails to preserve these objectives constitutes oppression and corruption, and the removal of them is desirable in Islam, for these are the ultimate goals of Islamic law. God commands Muslims to be just and righteous. They are to do good deeds and avoid evil deeds for the betterment of their lives. Islam is not a mere ideological theory, but a practical system of life based on the revealed message and human reasoning.

The Five Legal Principles

Islam introduces comprehensive sets of laws that cover all aspects of human life. After understanding the goals of the Islamic laws, legal scholars divide the actions of believers into five categories through which the validity of an act is measured. These categories are known in Islamic law as *al-Ahkam al-Khamsah* (the Five Values). They are:

- a) **Obligatory Act** (*fard* or *Wajib*). This is an act that a Muslim must perform. It is a necessary act whose performance entails reward (*thawab*), and whose omission entails punishment, like daily prayers and giving support to the poor. Performing an obligatory act exhibits the readiness of a Muslim to submit to God. His readiness to support the poor shows his commitment to the community.
- b) **Recommended Act** (*mandub* or *mustahab* or *Sunnah*). This is an act that is recommended by the law. Its performance entails a reward, but its omission does not entail any punishment, like charity, or doing meritorious acts. Recommended acts are duties suggested by the laws to be performed by individuals to bring them close to God or to build stronger relationships among fellow human beings.

c) **Indifferent Act** (*mubah*). This is a permissible act. A believer has total freedom to do or not to do it. Its performance does not entail reward and its omission entails no punishment either, like eating and drinking. A Muslim has the choice to eat or drink at any time that he/she wants except during the fasting period. The commission or omission of an indifferent act is equally legitimate. Muslim scholars regard this act a blessing from God in that believers are given freedom to do or not do whatever they want.¹⁴⁴ However, if anyone does an indifferent act as an act of worship, he/she receives reward from God.

d) **Prohibited Act** (*haram*). This is an impermissible act whose performance entails punishment and its omission entails a reward. It is a forbidden act in Islam, like drinking alcohol, gambling, or engaging in fornication. There are many things that Islam condemns. Muslims are expected not to do whatever the law prohibits for God will punish them if they do not repent. Muslims believe that anything that is forbidden by God must be harmful to human beings, and that through His Mercy, He let believers know them so that they can be free from harm or injury, physically and mentally.

e) **Repugnant Act** (*makruh*). This is a disapproval of act whose commission does not entail punishment, but its omission may entail a reward, like eating while walking or making unnecessary jokes, or asking unnecessary questions.

Major Differences Between Islamic Law and Common Law

Islamic law regulates the daily affairs of Muslims. In this section, we will focus upon some major differences between Islamic law and Common law (Western law).

The first major difference between the two is that Islamic law is a divine law, a revealed law, which originates from God. The Common law is not divine; it derives its sources from human beings. That is, it is a man-made law. In other words, God revealed the law of Islam to the Prophet, while Common law is based upon the opinions of a select

¹⁴⁴ For detailed discussion of these five categories, see Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Usul al-Fiqh*, pp. 28-54. See also, Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, pp. 40-42.

group of human beings who gather together to promote the special interests of those who elect them to the position of authority. This group serves and caters primarily to the interests of their constituents. Sovereignty belongs to God in Islamic law, whereas in common law, sovereignty belongs to human beings. In the U.S., for example, there are some states that allow capital punishment, such as Texas and Virginia. There are other states that oppose capital punishment and argue that it is barbaric and inhumane. However, each state serves the interests of its citizens; there exists among them no agreed upon values. Each state has the right to follow its desires and whims, even at the expense of innocent victims. One state may legalize same-sex marriage, for example, while a neighboring state may make it illegal.

The second major difference lies in the fact that Islamic laws are inclusive in nature, while Common law is restrictive or narrow. By inclusiveness, we mean that law in Islam covers all aspects of human life, private and public, religious and non-religious, personal and social. It is both a religious and a legal system. Islamic laws contain everything for public, private, social, national and international conduct. On the other hand, Common laws are limited to public issues and pay little or no attention to religious issues, which are considered to be personal affairs. Common laws do not deal with religious beliefs or anything pertaining to the afterlife.

Practically speaking, proponents of Common laws often argue that the law should not interfere with the personal affairs of a person or personal moral values. Law should deal only with the external conduct of the people. On the contrary, Islamic laws address both the external and internal conduct of a Muslim, who is seen, holistically, a person whose external and internal actions cannot be divorced from one another; they are indeed complementary to one another. Thus, one part of Islamic law deals with religious observances like performance of the daily prayers, giving support to the poor, issues concerning life after death, etc. The second part addresses the affairs of daily life, such as criminal laws, transactional laws, family laws, administrative laws, tax laws, etc.¹⁴⁵

The third major difference concerns the ways and methods of enforcing the law itself. In Islamic law, human consciousness is

developed to do good deeds and avoid evil actions without being policed by the agent of the authority, for a Muslim knows that God watches over him/her. He/she is accountable for his/her deeds even if nobody catches him/her while he/she is committing a crime. This self-consciousness motivates him/her to comply with the law of God by himself because he wants to be an obedient servant of God. This is not to say that every Muslim complies with the laws of God at all times. There are some Muslims who do not follow God's laws. In Common law, the laws are operative only under a rigid enforcement schema by law enforcement agents. Whenever citizens find any loophole that allows them to violate the law, they waste no time in committing any crimes they want, as long as law enforcement agents do not catch them. Thus, while Islamic laws are operative by internal manifestation and are predicated on human conscience, Common laws are operative and kept enforced by the temporal power. When temporal power changes hands, the manner in which the laws are enforced change as well.

A particularly vivid example of this principle is the drug laws. Both Islamic law and Common law condemn the use of drugs such as narcotics and marijuana. Yet, Muslims generally refrain from using them not because of the law enforcement agents but because of the fear of God in their minds. On the contrary, in Common law, law enforcement agents spend billions of dollars to prevent drug use and punish their users. They have not succeeded because they deal with the external conduct of users only and neglect the internal urge that motivates a person to continue using the drugs. Islamic laws are designed to prevent crime before its occurrence by cultivating good conscience in individuals and families so that all understand that using drugs is a crime against God.

On the contrary, Common law aims at punishing the criminal *after* the crime has already happened rather than preventing its occurrence in the first place. Criminals are presumably held responsible under Common law to have known what is right or wrong without being taught or educated, despite the fact that what is legal in one state may be illegal in another state. Oftentimes, the state enacts any law it wants to satisfy the interests of the people it serves. In Islam, individuals learn about lawful and unlawful acts and their consequences from an early

¹⁴⁵ For more information, see Mahmassani, p. 10.

age as they begin to learn about their religion. Whatever Islamic law considers legal or lawful will always be lawful; and whatever it declares to be unlawful will always be unlawful, regardless of where a person resides in the Muslim world.

Another major difference lies in Islamic law's positive approach to preventing crimes through the principles of reward and punishment. Believers are rewarded for obeying the laws and receive punishment for disobeying and neglecting the law. Under Common law, there exists no reward for being obedient to the law, and yet there is always punishment for violating the law. If a driver in Texas has been a good driver for fifty years, he would not be compensated or rewarded for being a good driver. If he runs a red light and he is caught, he will be given a ticket regardless of his good record of driving. In other words, Common law has no reward system for being an obedient person. As such, members of society, especially the rich, are not fully encouraged to obey the law when there is a chance to violate it law for personal gain and get away with it.

Further, while some parts of Islamic law can be categorized as permanent laws, which do not change at all, other parts can be categorized as flexible laws whereby changes are allowed to meet the ever-increasing requirements of different times and ages. By examining Common laws, we found that all laws are subject to change, at any time, by any authority in power; thus the laws fluctuate and remain complex. In Islamic law, there are some basic laws that are always stable and permanent, like capital law, the prohibition of gambling, adultery, theft, and some rules of inheritance, the laws of marriage, or prohibition of consuming any intoxicant or using any drugs. These laws are spelled out explicitly in definite terms and without any ambiguity in the *Qur'an* and the authentic *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, God requires Muslims to implement them. These laws are neither subject to modification nor amendment, they are given-laws. Muslims submit to them because they cover the areas that they believe are so crucial to their existence. Muslims have no right to vote for the legalization of the use of drugs under any pretext.

There are other areas whereby the laws can be modified and adjusted. Even new laws can be enacted to meet the expanding needs

of human beings or attend to their growth and development in all spheres of life at any age. These laws include the law of tort, business, employment, law of war, contract, international laws, labor laws, and many others, whose subject matters are dictated by the interests of Muslims and their social conditions. While Muslims will argue for the superiority of Islamic law over Common law, I would rather say that the question is not whether Islamic law is superior to Common law; it is whether the law achieves its goals in bringing peace to the community and eradicating evils from society. Whenever Islamic law is applied, Muslims strongly believe that there will be peace in society. Indeed, research statistics have shown that fewer crimes are committed in those Muslim countries that apply Islamic laws as compared to those countries that apply Common laws.¹⁴⁶

It should be pointed out that Muslim jurists are not claiming that if Islamic laws are fully applied, all societal problems will be solved, or if the Islamic penal codes are implemented, all crimes will disappear from the face of earth. Rather, Muslim jurists affirm that there would be fewer crimes. There is no problem-free or crime-free society. Islam only creates and establishes rules to ensure the elimination of the causes of the commission of crimes, and preventing them before they occur by cultivating God's consciousness in the minds of individuals. But, if in spite of these rules, the evil doers or criminals commit them, Islam punishes them in such a way that others will be deterred from committing the same crimes, and if they intend to do those crimes, they think twice because of the consequences that await them. Islam encourages that the punishment for criminal offenses (*hudud*) be carried out in public and be witnessed by as many members of the community as possible, so as to be a deterrent to others.

The Islamic Law of Punishment (*Hudud*)

Many people criticize Islam primarily because of its laws of punishment (the *hudud*). They perceive Islamic laws as harsh and barbaric; they think these laws should not be applied to so-called modern society, the civilized world. They wonder why any law should

¹⁴⁶ This applies only before the modern war of terrorism and suicide bombing.

There are many crimes committed nowadays in the Muslim world in the name of Islam.

endorse capital punishment; they question why a person's life should be taken for "mere illegal intercourse," particularly when both parties consent to it. "Are human beings not free to do whatever they want?" they ask. Islamically speaking, Muslims are free within the rules set down by God. It is on this basis that the laws of punishment in Islam are called *hudud*, which means setting limitations. That is, God has set limits and requires believers not to transgress them. If they do, they will be punished.

Hudud is the plural of *hadd*. It means an unalterable punishment prescribed by God in the *Qur'an* or by the Prophet in the *Sunnah*, the application of which is considered the right of God (*haqq Allah*), the public right.¹⁴⁷ There are crimes that have fixed penalty in Islam. The punishments for them are clearly stated in the *Qur'an* and unanimously agreed upon. These are: murder, theft, armed robbery, illicit sexual relations, and slanderous accusation of un-chastity. There are two other crimes that are seen by the majority of scholars to have been clearly stated in the *Qur'an* or the *Sunnah*. They are laws of apostasy and alcohol drinking. The punishment for these two is not expressly mentioned in the *Qur'an* or the *Sunnah*. They are disputable because the punishment for alcohol drinking was not fixed by God or the Prophet, but by the companions of the Prophet through analogy. Also, God in the *Qur'an* did not mention the death penalty for apostasy. However, the majority of scholars argue that the Prophet prescribed that punishment, while a few scholars disagreed, arguing that it was the companions of the Prophet who prescribed the law of apostasy and it was unanimously agreed upon and applied during the reign of Caliph Abu Bakr, who fought the apostates until many of them reverted back to Islam.

The fixed punishments in Islam are the cutting off of hands for theft (some scholars today preach its suspension), stoning or scourging for illicit intercourse, adultery or fornication (*zina*), scourging for falsely accusing married women or men (*qadhf*), killing and robbery. The application of this differs according to circumstances. Giving eighty lashes for alcohol drinking or any other intoxicant and death penalty for apostasy are punishments not mentioned in the *Qur'an*. An apostate is considered treasonous in Islam. These laws are termed fixed laws because they are not subject to change at the will of the authority;

147 Mohamed S. El-Awa, *Punishment in Islamic Law: A Comparative Study* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1982), p. 1.

rather, they are unchangeable laws that must be applied wherever Islamic laws are in operation. Of course, the methods of proving these crimes and the procedures to be followed in applying them differ from one country to another and from one society to another. However, Shaykh El-Awa mentions that these laws are perceived as the rights of God, *haqq Allah*, in that they embody three main aspects:

- a) The punishment is prescribed for the sake of the public interest, which overrides individual interests.
- b) That the punishment is fixed; it cannot be lightened or made heavier. Judges are to apply it.
- c) Whenever such a crime is reported to the judge or an authority, it is not to be retracted by judge, by the political authority, or by the victim of the offense.¹⁴⁸ It should not be withdrawn by any means, because prevention of such crimes protects all members of society as a whole.

Family Law in Islam

Family structure is the backbone of Islamic society. Islam encourages its adherents to marry and build a community that will apply the laws of God. Family law enjoys a place of pride in Islamic law. The majority of the laws in the *Qur'an* address family issues more than any other subject. It is through the family that society raises and trains its individuals and prepares them for their duties and obligations in the community. The rules governing family life are detailed in the *Qur'an*. Who should a Muslim marry, who should be the head of the family, or who should be responsible financially for the family? The *Qur'an* provides answers to these questions. What are the rights of the wife, the husband, the parents and their children, and how will the property of a deceased person be allocated or distributed? The *Qur'an* discusses these issues.

Since the establishment of a Muslim family begins with marriage, Islam lays down many regulations on how and who to marry. Muslim scholars, in this regard, emphasize four major requirements for a valid marriage. These are:

148 El-Awa, p. 1 quoting Abdul Qadir 'Awdah in *Al-Tashree' al-Jina'i al-Islami*, vol. 1, p. 79.

- a) the consent of the bride and the bridegroom to the marriage;
- b) the approval of the bride's parents, the guardians;
- c) offering of a token amount of money to the bride (dowry);
- d) and the endorsement of two witnesses to the marriage to prevent the marriage from being a secret affair.

When these conditions are met, the marriage is legally valid. When any of these conditions is not met, the marriage is illegal. On this basis, a pre-arranged marriage, for instance, is not valid until the bride and the bridegroom consent to it.

Pre-arranged marriage, a marriage without getting the approval of the wife, husband or both, is illegal in Islam. Pre-arranged marriages are common in many parts of the Muslim world, particularly in India, Pakistan, Arabia, and Africa. In Islam, marriage is a contract and a life commitment. People are free to go into it and free to get out of it. It is not a sacrament. But how can a family be happy if its members do not know or like one another or do not want to be with one another? From an Islamic point of view, whenever a pre-arranged marriage occurs without the consent of both parties, each party has a right to seek dissolution and termination of such an unhealthy relationship through an Islamic court. It was reported in a *Hadith* by Abdullah bin Buraydah that one of the companions of the Prophet married his daughter to someone. The young girl did not like the marriage; she complained to the Prophet. He gave her permission to stay in the marriage or to seek divorce. However, she did not terminate the marriage but she said that she wanted Muslim women to know that their fathers have no right to force them into a marriage without their consent.¹⁴⁹

A case in point illustrating this is the case of Miss Karimatu Yakubu. She sued her father, who arranged her marriage to someone whom she did not want to marry. This case is between Miss Karimatu Yakubu and Alhaji Mahmoud Ndatsu as appellants and Alhaji Yakubu Tafida (Karimatu's father) and Alhaji Umaru Gwagwada as respondents. The legal issues involved in this case are as follows:

- 1) Whether a father has the right to force his daughter to marry someone he chooses for her.

- 2) If a father voluntarily allows his daughter to choose her husband, can he withdraw his permission for the marriage? Can she marry whomever she wants other than the choice of the father?

Miss Karimatu is the young beautiful daughter of Alhaji Yakubu Tafida. At the age of nineteen, which is considered a late age for marriage in Hausa culture, three suitors sought her hand in marriage. None of the suitors came to her directly; they approached her father, as is the custom. The father rejected one of them. He told her about the other two suitors, Mahmoud Ndatsu and Umaru Gwagwadu. Both appeared to be rich, famous, and old. The father asked her to choose between the two despite that she had not seen either of them. Karimatu was inclined initially to marry Umaru based on the information she heard about him from her mother and other relatives. She did not know him personally. Her father wanted her to marry Mahmoud and he intentionally allowed Mahmoud to meet and talk to her with the hope that he would win her heart. Miss Karimatu preferred Alhaji Umaru, who subsequently sent a message of betrothal to which the father agreed. Before the marriage ceremony was solemnized, Karimatu changed her mind. She complained bitterly that Alhaji Umaru himself, who already had another wife, did not visit her after the first meeting with her father. He continuously sent a middleman¹⁵⁰ to her, at times with gifts. Thus, she interpreted Alhaji Umaru's attitude as lack of love and concern for her. She declined to marry him. At that time, she was away from her hometown. It was reported that she went back to school to complete her higher education. Now she preferred to marry Alhaji Mahmoud instead. She wrote to her father and her uncle explaining to them the reason why she changed her mind. Her choice of marrying Alhaji Mahmoud received a bitter response from her father, who insisted that she must marry Alhaji Umaru because he had promised him that his daughter would marry him. When Karimatu was unable to convince her father of her decision, she wrote again to her uncle and to the chief judge of Sokoto State seeking their help and advice.¹⁵¹

150 24 A middleman is the one who mediates between two families: the bride's family and the bridegroom's family. He is appointed mostly by the bridegroom's family.

151 For more details about the letters which Karimatu wrote to her father before suing him to the Area Court, see Musa Ajetonmobi's Ph. D dissertation,

149 Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, 7th ed., vol. 2:130.

Before she received any response from her uncle or the chief judge, things got out of control. Her father had conducted a marriage on her behalf to Alhaji Umaru. She did not agree with the marriage and did not move to Alhaji Umaru's house; she sued her father at the Area Court (a lower family court) at Mina in Niger State, Nigeria. After the court examined the case, it dissolved her marriage with Alhaji Umaru on the grounds that she was married to him without her consent.¹⁵² And as pointed out before, the consent of both wife and husband is a prerequisite for a valid marriage in Islam. Without it, there is no legal marriage. Based on that decision by the Area Court, Karimatu decided to marry Alhaji Mahmoud, who she finally chose. They married one another. The Emir (mayor) of Mina acted as her guardian instead of her father, who refused to be her guardian in this second marriage.¹⁵³

Objecting to the Area Court's decision, Karimatu's father, Alhaji Yakubu Tafida, appealed to the *Shari'ah Court of Appeal* at Sokoto. The judges at the *Shari'ah Court of Appeal* examined the case and endorsed her father's appeal. The court affirmed his right to force his unmarried daughter into a marriage without her full consent on the grounds of her lack of experience in marital affairs.¹⁵⁴ The Appeal Court reversed the decision of the Area Court (the lower court) and ordered that Karimatu leave Alhaji Mahmoud's house, observe the legal waiting period (*iddah*), and move to Alhaji Umaru's house. The judges argued that there was no reason why the father should be deprived of his right of compulsion (*ijbar*) in marriage since his daughter is young.

"*Shari'ah* Legal Practice in Nigeria: 1956-1983," Ph. D diss., University of Ilorin, Department of Islamic Studies, June 1988, pp. 529-535.

152 Alhaji Ma'aji Isa Shani and Mohammad Altaf Hussain Ahangar, "Marriage Guardianship in Islam: Reflections on a Recent Nigerian Judgment," in the *Journal of Islamic and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 6, no. 4, (1986): 278. This is the only reason given by the Area Court in making its judgment of lack of consent from the girl, which constitutes the backbone of a marriage contract, and the first condition to be met in all Islamic marriages. This condition is known as "offer and acceptance." It is a proposal from the man and acceptance to marry him from the girl.

153 That the second marriage was conducted between Karimatu and Alhaji Mahmoud apparently showed that she was interested in marriage.

154 Ruxton, F. H. *Maliki Law* (Connecticut: Hyperion Press Inc., 1980), p. 92.

Alhaji Mahmoud, Karimatu's second husband, did not accept the *Shari'ah Court of Appeal's* judgment. He appealed to the Nigerian Federal Court of Appeal in Kaduna, the highest court in Nigeria.¹⁵⁵ After hearing from both sides, the Federal Court of Appeal endorsed the decision of the Area Court and set aside the judgment of the *Shari'ah Court of Appeal*. The judges at the Federal Court argued that since the father had given his daughter the right to choose in the beginning, he (the father) had lost the right of compulsion. It also argued that Karimatu's marriage to Alhaji Umaru was invalid because she did not consent to it. Her decision should be respected because she was the one who will live with the husband. Karimatu agreed with the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal and felt happy with it. She married Alhaji Mahmoud and enjoyed her life with him. Her decision to marry whomever she wanted is Islamic and that is why she won the case.

As evidenced in the above case, marriage in Islam is the backbone of establishing a good family, upon which a Muslim society is built. The laws governing family affairs are detailed in the *Qur'an* as well as in the *Hadith*. Muslims have their own courts, judges, and follow their own procedures. These, at times, differ greatly from Western procedures. When a Muslim is not satisfied with the judgment of any court, he or she has the right of appeal to a higher Islamic court as in any other legal system. A majority of Muslims feel proud of their laws and are ready to submit to them. Unfortunately, many Westerners do not understand how Islamic laws operate, and since these laws are totally different from theirs, they assume that Muslims have no trained judges and think that those judges follow their whims in making legal decisions. Nothing is farther from the truth than such a naive notion. Islamic laws cover all aspects of life and aim at promoting justice and providing peace in society, whereby everyone can live peacefully. Islamic law is exploited in the Western world and depicted as a form of domination and control, especially favoring men over women. Some actually think that Islamic laws do not promote equality or justice and therefore should not be applied anywhere.

155 Judges at the Federal Court of Appeal include Muslim judges who are versed in both Islamic laws and Common laws, and have had years of experience as high court judges before being appointed to the Federal Court of Appeals for the Federation.

Summary:

Alarm flags are often raised when people discuss Islamic law. Non-Muslims and some modern Muslims alike express great fear about the application of Islamic laws. Nothing comes to their minds except the criminal laws of Islam: capital punishment, the amputation of hands, and the beating of the drunkard. Why should a person be beaten for drinking a cup of wine, they always ask? Yet, when an accident occurs and an innocent person becomes a victim of a drunk driver, then they think of the evil of alcoholism. It should be regulated, the families of the victims would cry out. Nevertheless, the fear ascribed to the application of Islamic law is due to lack of knowledge about the Islamic legal system.

Islamic law, the *Shari'ah*, connotes God's commandments as put forth in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad, and as applied by Muslim scholars (*fuqaha'*). This law covers two different aspects: religious and transactional laws. The religious laws deal with human relationship with God. The transactional laws address the laws governing the relationship between a person and his/her fellow human beings. Both laws are revealed and Muslim scholars carry out their interpretations and applications. During the time of Prophet Muhammad, Muslims relied heavily on him for legislation. After his death, his words and actions, which were memorized and recorded, became the second source of Islamic law. When scholars could not find a solution to a legal problem in the *Qur'an* or in the *Sunnah*, they resorted to the unanimous opinions of the companions of the Prophet. This is known as consensus (*ijma'*). If they did not succeed, they resorted to analogy (*Qiyas*) by using their individual reasoning. *Qiyas* is the art of comparing a new case to an old case due to the similarity between the two and applying the old ruling to the new case.

As Islam spread to many countries, new legal and social problems emerged and prompted new solutions. Muslim scholars stood up to the task. They suggested different approaches and varied solutions. Such approaches led to the emergence of different schools of Islamic law, among which four schools are prominent. These are: the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools. There are a few other schools that are not famous. These extant schools, although different in name, follow and rely on the same sources: the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. They

recognize one another and Muslims are free to follow any school of law they want. Their differences rest mainly on their interpretations of the texts and how the laws can be applied in different situations and in multicultural settings.

Primarily, the goals of Islamic laws are: preservation of religion through which humans establish and strengthen their relationship with God, protection of wealth and property upon which the livelihood of humans depends, protection of human life and honor, which are considered sacred, and the protection of human intellect against anything that can cause harm to the brain. There are many other objectives, but the above five are the most essential. Their protection brings happiness to human beings. The lack of their protection draws humans to vanity and causes a great harm to the community.

Since Islamic law governs all aspects of Muslim daily life, Muslim scholars designed five categories of acts through which all deeds of a Muslim are measured and assessed. These categories are called the five principles. The actions of an individual fall into one of them.

- a) (*Wajib, Halal*) An act which is lawful and Muslims are strongly encouraged to do.
- b) (*Haram*) An act which is unlawful. Muslims are strongly discouraged from performing it.
- c) (*Mustahab*) An act which is preferable to be done.
- d) (*Makruh*) An act which is preferable not to be done.
- e) (*Mubah*) An act which is indifferent. A Muslim has freedom to do or not to do it.

This categorization helps believers know the quality of what they are requested to or not to do and enables them to comply with what God wants. A majority of Muslims believe that Islamic laws are divine laws revealed by God. True believers are expected to follow them because they bring happiness and peace to them.

Muslim scholars point out a few major differences between Islamic law and Common law, the Western law. Among these differences are that Islamic laws are inclusive in nature. They cover all aspects of human life, religious and non-religious. On the contrary, Common law only covers those aspects that deal with human relationships. It considers human relationships with God outside the scope of law; this

is considered a personal affair into which the law should not interfere. In addition, in Islam, some laws are fixed and not subject to change, like capital punishment; some laws are changeable. In Common law, any law or rule is changeable because human beings enact them. Law is not divine or sacred. Muslims also believe that God will reward them if they obey and comply with the laws of God. In Common law, a person receives no reward for complying with the law,¹⁵⁶ but is punished whenever he violates the law. Law, Western scholars insist, is any rule whose violation is backed up with punishment. If there is no punishment for any rule, such a rule will be considered a moral injunction. No person will be compensated for being a law-abiding person. If a person drives safely for fifty years, and he is caught running a red light one day for one reason or the other, he will be given a traffic violation ticket by the police, despite his fifty years of having a good driving record. Of course, he may have a good record with his car insurance company, and he may not be charged extra money.

Finally, family law enjoys place of pride in Islam because it is the backbone of Islamic family structure. It is the only institution through which the individual members of society are brought into this life and trained as useful members of the Islamic community. The *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* detail vividly the laws and rules that govern Islamic family structure. Despite this coverage, Muslims in many parts of the world follow their customs and culture rather than the dictates of the *Qur'an* or the *Sunnah*, as evidenced in Islamic marriages. For instance, Islam discourages pre-arranged marriage, yet Muslims around the world practice it. However, whenever Muslims deviate from the laws of God, the Islamic court and Muslim judges are there to correct the wrong and bring violators to justice. If a believer disagrees with the decision of any particular court or legal institution, he or she is free to appeal to any other superior court. Islam has its own laws, its own judges and legal experts, who are trained in the discipline, and has its own procedures, which are at times different from the procedures followed in the West. Of course, Muslims are free to apply their laws in any way they want as long as they do not force them on others who do not share their religious worldviews or thoughts.

¹⁵⁶ This statement may be too generalized for one receives occasionally reduction in payment of insurance if one has no violation record.

Suggested Readings:

1. Abu Zahrah, Muhammad, *Usul al-Fiqh* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1979).
2. El-Awa, Mohamed S., *Punishment in Islamic Law* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1982).
3. Faruki, Kemal A., *Islamic Jurisprudence* (Pakistan, Lahore: National Book Foundation, 1975).
4. Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad, *Al-Mustasfa min 'Ilm al-Usul* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Amiriyah, 1937).
5. Hallaq, Wael, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
6. Kamali, Mohammad Hashim, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991).
7. Khaduri, Majid, *Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1987).
8. Mahmassani, Sobhi M., *Falsafat al-Tashri' al-Islami*. [*The Philosophy of Jurisprudence in Islam*] (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961).
9. Qadri, Anwar A., *Islamic Jurisprudence in the Modern World* (Pakistan, Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1981).
10. Ruxton, F. H. *Maliki Law*. Connecticut: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1980.
11. Shatibi, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Musa al-, *Al-Muwafaqaat fi Usul al-Ahkam* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Salafiyyah, n. d. Old version was published by the same publisher in 1996).

CHAPTER VII

ISLAM AND SPIRITUAL LIFE (SUFISM)

Introduction

On a very windy day, a caravan left Iran heading to Baghdad, Iraq. On its way, the caravan was high-jacked by robbers. Its crew was subdued and the robbers took all visible property. Each member of the caravan was thoroughly searched. Whatever the robbers found, they took. The victims were even asked whether they had any other things with them. Among the members of the caravan was a teenage boy who was going to Baghdad as a student. He sat down powerlessly, looking very dull. The robbers came to him and asked whether he had anything with him. He answered in the affirmative. They searched him and found nothing. He was asked again; he answered that he had money with him. He was searched again and nothing was found. Thus, he was brought to the chief of the robbers. The chief turned red with frustration and asked the boy whether he had any money with him. The boy answered yes. "How much did you have?" he asked. "Forty dinars," the boy responded. "Where did you keep it?" "In my woolen jacket," he said without fear. "Bring it out immediately," the chief robber shouted. The boy tore his jacket and pulled out forty dinars.

The boy was asked why he disclosed the location of his money - if he had not told them, nobody would have known that he had it. To the robbers' surprise the teenage boy said that his mother had told him never to tell a lie, even if his life was threatened. And he had promised

to follow his mother's advice. The chief robber was so astonished to hear this story and hardly believed what he heard. Then he commented: "This boy was so obedient to his mother, while I was disobedient to my Creator, God." This was a turning point in the chief robber's life. He returned the forty dinars to the boy and asked his bandits to return to the caravan members whatever they had taken from them. He repented and renounced the life of a robber. That teenage boy was later known to be Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, the head of the Qadiriyyah movement, one of the largest Sufi orders in the Muslim world.¹⁵⁷

Simply put, Sufism is to be truthful to God in words and actions. It is a way to reach God through purification of the soul (*tahdhib al-nafs*). Perhaps it is a discipline, which is difficult to adequately define. However, Muslim scholars define Sufism as:

- a) The inner and esoteric dimension of Islam, the inner source of life and the center which coordinates inwardly the whole religious organism of Islam.¹⁵⁸
- b) An attempt to offer the religious soul the opportunity to get to the core of its faith, the unity of God (*tauhid*).
- c) The act of devoting oneself to the mystic life or becoming what is called in Islam a Sufi.¹⁵⁹
- d) The knowledge of oneself, which leads one to the knowledge (gnosis - *ma'rifah*) of God.¹⁶⁰

All the above definitions assert that Sufism is a spiritual development of the soul. This discipline has the aim of relating the soul to God, its Creator. Any science or knowledge that assists a Muslim in developing his spirituality himself in order to be close to God is termed Sufism—the mystical path. In reality, Sufism is to take one step further towards reaching God, the ultimate reality, the One in whom all other things are

157 K. J. Ahmad, *Hundred Great Muslims* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1994), p. 119.

158 Eyyed Hossein Nast, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), p. 121.

159 H. A. R. Gibb, and Kramers, J. H. *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1991) 3rd ed., s. v. *Tasawwuf*, p. 579.

160 Nasrollah S. Fetemi, Faramatz S. Fetemi and Fariborz S. Fetemi, *Sufism: Message of Brotherhood, Harmony, and Hope* (New York: A. S. Barnes and company, 1976), p. 37.

perceived to be His creation. These creatures are transitory in essence; they have no permanent existence in themselves. The *Qur'an* clearly states that everything on earth will vanish except the Almighty God. Sufism means plunging into that which is permanent by letting go of that which perishes.

In order to attain this goal, a Muslim must recognize the existence of one God, the source of all other realities, in whose behalf and for whose purposes all other material things can be sacrificed due to the enduring fulfillment or gain which accrues from being dependent upon Him. In this sense, Sufism is the compassionate longing of the soul for God, the unseen, the loved. Thus, establishing a strong experiential relationship between humans and God is what Sufism is about. While Sufism is the discipline of the soul, a Sufi is the seeker who subscribes to this discipline and wants to cleanse his heart and purify his soul to become a faithful and sincere servant of God ('*abd Allah*'). Hence, he engages himself not in the literal and legalistic aspects of the religion, which he does well, but looks inwardly to the real meanings and essence of what he is required to do, and how those meanings can be applied in his daily life with the hope of getting closer to God and becoming a friend of God (*habib Allah*).

However, the early Sufi masters defined Sufism as portraying what Sufis were doing and what their goals were. Al-Junaid, one of the early Sufi leaders, renders Sufism as:

The security of the heart and generosity of the soul whereby a Sufi epitomizes the best moral qualities and shows the unconditional servitude to God by voluntarily denying and escaping the treasures of this material world.¹⁶¹

In this explication, Sufism is the art of possessing nothing and not being possessed by anything except *Allah*. That is, a total break off with this world, which may prevent a seeker from reaching God.¹⁶² What is essential to seekers thus are the moral qualities of those who tread this path and the "purity of their hearts from the pollution of discord, by

161 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, N. Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 14-15.

162 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

keeping the commandments of the beloved, God."¹⁶³ Schimmel explains that Sufis are those people who are completely absorbed in the Divine Beloved, those who do not think of anything but God. Their hearts are purified from any attachment to anything other than Almighty God. They emphasize moral qualities. It is reported that Hasan al-Basri once said: "An ounce of genuine decency is better than a thousand times of fasting and prayers."¹⁶⁴ Schimmel has also eloquently summarized what Sufism meant to early Muslims when she says:

Sufism meant, in the formative period, mainly the interiorizing of Islam, a personal experience of the central mystery of Islam, that of *tauhid*, 'to declare that God is One.' The Sufis always remained inside the fold of Islam, and their mystical attitude was not limited by the adherence to any of the legal or theological schools. They could reach their goal from any standpoint, neither the differences between the legal *madhhabs* nor theological hair splitting was, basically, of interest to them.¹⁶⁵

Schimmel quotes Hujwiri, a Sufi scholar, who said that the Sufis considered this life to be short and the knowledge about it is so immense that it is not obligatory to learn all the sciences of this world, but only that knowledge which bears upon religious law.¹⁶⁶

Sufism cannot be fully rendered in a few words; however, it can be summarized in Islam as the purification of the heart, the remembrance of God at all times, the avoidance of bad moral qualities, guidance against the temptation of desires, and striving to be close to God in order to become His obedient and beloved servant (*abd Allah*). It is Islam in practice, as long as the seeker adheres to the teachings of Islam as expressed in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. Sufism is the adaptation of every higher quality and discarding of every low quality, a practice leading towards the inner awakening and enlightenment of the soul.¹⁶⁷

163 *Ibid.*

164 Fatemi, p. 67, quoting *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah*, p. 63.

165 Schimmel, *Mystical*, p. 17.

166 Schimmel, *Mystical*, p. 17.

167 Shaykh Fadlalla, Haeri, *The Elements of Sufism* (Massachusetts: Element, 1993), pp. 1-2.

What Is The Origin of the Word "Sufism"?

The word "Sufism" is derived from the Arabic root word "*safa*," which means purity. Others say it is derived from the woolen cloak, which the Sufis wear to denote their renunciation of and detachment from the material world. It also refers to the early Sufis who were living at the corridor of the Prophet's mosque at Medina; they were known as "*ahlu Suffah* -the people of the bench." All these are only external descriptions of the Sufis; they do not perceive themselves as such. For in the beginning, the Sufis had no name; they were striving to communicate with and become close to God. The name was given to them in the second or third century of Islam.

Those who relate them to the Bench and to wool express the outward aspect of their conditions: for they were people who had left this world, departed from their homes, fled from their companions. They wandered about the land, mortifying the carnal desires, and making naked the body; they took of this world's good only so much as is indispensable for covering the nakedness and allaying hunger.¹⁶⁸

How Did Sufism Emerge?

If Sufism is understood as a fervent attempt to make a relationship with God and to purify the heart, then its history is as old as the history of the existence of human beings. From the first creation, human beings have been struggling to be like their creator. Thus, the practice of Sufism was itself very old although the term was coined in the second or third century. Early Muslim scholars called this spiritual path the science of behavior (*'ilm al-Akhlaq*), through which a Muslim learns how to behave in the presence of God and how to win His mercy and love. It also deals with how to serve and relate to other human beings and live with them harmoniously.

The method of attaining this standard of behavior has been established in the *Qur'an* and was taught by the Prophet Muhammad

when he was alive. His companions also patterned their lives according to those teachings, as they recognized that life on earth was temporal and that eternal life awaited them in heaven. Thus, those companions paid less attention to worldly affairs and concentrated mostly on developing their spiritual relationship with God. Of course, they balanced between their needs in this earthly life and preparation for the next life. And if Sufism is understood as the way of internalizing the Islamic faith and its practices, then the companions of the Prophet would be considered the Sufis *par excellence*.

The Sufis took the Prophet Muhammad as their guide; they purified their hearts and struggled day and night to do what God wanted them to do, while spreading Islam to all their neighbors. Islamic spirituality thus, at its best, is an expression of the harmony between this world and the next, between piety and politics, a balanced life for committed Muslims.

Historically, before Muhammad became the Prophet in 610 C. E., he used to escape to Mount Hira in Mecca for meditation. His method of meditation at that time was unknown except that he wanted to purify himself and see things as they really were. When he became the Prophet, he was instructed to develop himself spiritually and offer night prayers (*Qur'an* 73:2-9). He in turn taught his disciples different ways of communicating with God. His own acquaintance with this spiritual life set a pattern for his immediate disciples, many of whom actually lived sober and simple lives, as evidenced in the biography of people like Abu Bakr, Umar bin al-Khattab, Ali bin Abi Talib, Mus'ab bin Umayr, Hudhayfah bin al-Yamam, Abu Dharri al-Ghifari, and Abu Hurayrah, to mention a few. These Muslim caliphs and leaders were the first generation who took Islam very seriously. They then spread it, and renounced this material world despite the great impact and influence they exerted in Islamic history.

The lives of people like Abu Bakr, one of the richest Arabs in Mecca before he became caliph, and Umar bin al-Khattab provided inspiration to the next generations of Islam. They proved that Islam, although it strove to establish the kingdom of God on earth, had the ability to draw human beings back to God and to the next world, the eternal life for true believers.

Muhammad introduced Islam to the Arabian Peninsula before he died. His successors took it upon themselves to spread Islam to many nations and won many territories to Islam within a short period. By the

168 Schimmel, *Mystical*, p. 14.

time that Ali bin Abi Talib, the fourth caliph, died in 661 C. E., Islam was already established in Iraq, Syria, and many other places. Later, the Umayyad Empire took over and ruled all Muslim lands. When Islam reached its peak of power, wealth came to the Islamic treasury from all corners of the conquered lands. Eventually, the Umayyad's leaders and many of their officials began to indulge in the material world. They neglected the spiritual aspects of Islam as if Muslims were created only to fulfill their lower desires. It was at that time, in the beginning of the second century, that a small group of Muslims stood up and encouraged other concerned Muslims to live a spiritual life. They encouraged them to shun the material life, which they believed would not lead them to salvation. The more these Muslims focused on possessing material objects, the more they strayed from God, their Creator. Many people did not listen to the Sufi plea in the beginning because it sounded like a strange call. But gradually, the Sufis won a few followers and started regular meetings at the mosque mainly, for the remembrance of God (*dhikr*) and to learn more about Islam and its practices.

The leaders of these groups emphasized the spiritual development of the soul and the renunciation of material possessions. They gave strong motivational lectures, which caused people to cry at the gatherings; these were later known as the weepers (*bak'atun*). This teaching of the inner and spiritual dimensions of Islam sprang up in many Islamic learning centers. The people who participated in such gatherings were given the title of "Sufis" through which is how they have been known ever since.¹⁶⁹

Sufism developed within the Islamic religion itself. It did not emerge as a foreign element or through alien influence. It was established by Muslims who were conscious of their beliefs, who wanted to return to the pristine message of Islam, which is witness to the Lordship of Almighty God, the only reality. They sought to realize and understand the true meaning of the word (*shahadah*) through the *Qur'an* and the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad. Certainly, the roots of Sufism lie in the *Qur'an* itself, which, on several occasions, requires true believers to totally surrender to God, the Creator, in all aspects of life.

169 Seyyed Hossein, Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi* (N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1976); p. 85. For more information about the use of the name Sufi on this group, see Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, 3rd ed., s. v. *Tasawwuf*, p. 582.

In fulfilling this requirement, the early Sufis committed their lives to worshipping of God and serving His creatures as much as they could. Although Islam does not deny the reality of the material world, the Sufis saw the material world as an impediment to reaching God and worshipping Him as He truly deserves to be worshipped.

The *Qur'anic* and Prophetic Origin of Sufism

While many Western scholars attribute the origin of Sufism to pre-Islamic times and to influences from Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, for one reason or another, Sufis trace their roots back to the *Qur'an* and to the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad. The Sufis quote a number of verses from the *Qur'an* which exhorts them to constantly remember God and be conscious of Him in all conditions and in all aspects of their lives. They believe very strongly that God has manifested Himself in the words of the *Qur'an*, through which He can be known.¹⁷⁰ It is in the *Qur'an* that the Sufis found answers to all of their questions regarding living spiritual lives. Everything concerning worldly and spiritual affairs can be found in this book. This shows how the self-understanding of the Muslim community grew and changed. To the Sufis, the *Qur'an* is the cornerstone of all their doctrines and beliefs.

When a Sufi asks, "How can I know God?" the answer comes forcefully from the *Qur'an*: "When My servant asks of Me, I am near (to him), I answer the call of the caller when he calls upon me." (*Qur'an* 2:186) "How close am I to God," a Sufi questions? "*I am close to My servant and nearer to him than his jugular vein.*" (*Qur'an* 50:16) "Who am I?" The *Qur'an* states that human beings are perishable creatures like all other creatures. Only God perishes not. "All that dwells upon the earth will perish except the Face of Your Lord, majestic and splendid." (*Qur'an* 55:27) When he asks, "Who is God?" God answers, "Say, He is One, the Eternal, the Besought, He begets not, nor is He begotten, none is rival unto Him." (*Qur'an* 112:1-3) Thus, the Sufis found the *Qur'an* to be the source of their inspiration, the code of their doctrines, and the answer to their questions. They believed that the *Qur'an* is not only a catechism of spirituality but also a source book of guidance to all that is good. To them, the *Qur'an* spells out guidelines

170 Schimmel, *Mystical*, pp. 24-25.

of human relationships with God as it regulates, in principle, the moral and practical lives of Muslims. God through the *Qur'an* answers the believers that He can be reached and that whenever they turn in their prayers, He will be found there. "To God belongs the east and the west, wherever you turn, there is the Face of God, God is All-embracing, all-knowing." (*Qur'an* 2:115)¹⁷¹

Sufis rely not only on the *Qur'an* for spirituality, but also appreciate the Prophetic traditions, particularly anything that pertains to the personality of Prophet Muhammad, whom they perceive as a symbol of a perfect human being (*al-Insan al-Kamil*).¹⁷² They study his spiritual and devotional life and strive to emulate him in all aspects. They are very attracted to the story of his ascendance to heaven as stated in chapters 17 and 53 of the *Qur'an* in which the Prophet was elevated to the presence of Almighty God in the seven heavens. This ascendance to them was the apex of spirituality—to be with God when one is still alive. Sufis believe that they will also be loved by God just like Muhammad if they follow his path of meditation and live an ascetic life. He who follows him, Sufis argue, will win the pleasure and love of God. "Say if you love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you and forgive you all your sins." (*Qur'an* 3:31)

The Prophet Muhammad instructed his followers on how to become close to Allah. The words are from God but the wording is from Muhammad. Ata bin Yasar reported that the Prophet Muhammad said that Almighty Allah says:

He who takes my beloved servant (*waliyy*) as an enemy, I will wage war against him. Nothing is more pleasing to Me to draw my servant (*abd*) near unto Me than the worship which I have made binding upon him. My servant ceases not to draw near unto Me with added devotions (*nawafil*) of his free will until I love him. When I love him, I am the hearing wherewith he hears, and the Sight wherewith he sees, and the hands through

which he grasps, and the foot whereon he walks. If he petitions Me (for anything), I'll grant him; if he seeks refuge with Me, I'll protect him. (Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah also reported that the Prophet said that Allah said:

I am with My servant whenever he remembers Me. If he mentions Me in himself, I will mention him in Myself. If he mentions Me in an assembly, I'll mention him in an assembly better than his, i.e., in heaven. If he comes close to Me by a step, I come closer to him by an elbow's length; if he comes nearer to Me by an elbow's length, I come to him by arm's length; if he comes to Me walking, I come to him running. (Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari.)

These reports show that early Sufis were actually inspired by the *Qur'an* and by the Prophet Muhammad. Of course, when Sufism spread rapidly in the second and third centuries of Islam, Sufi leaders may have interacted with other cultures and borrowed from them, but the origin of Sufism remains within Islam itself. One cannot be a Buddhist and be a Sufi simultaneously. A Sufi wants to be a friend of God, he longs to be close to and united with Him, while a Buddhist, particularly a Theravada Buddhist, does not believe in or recognize the existence of God. A Buddhist wants to be detached from everything. A Sufi wants to develop a relationship with the transcendent and be accepted and loved by Allah. This can only occur within Islam itself and not through any other religion.

In each tradition, spiritual tree must have its roots in the origins of that tradition. Every Christian would consider as absurd the assertion that the spirituality of St. Augustine is Greek on account of his knowledge of Platonism and Neo-Platonism since he knows that St. Augustine became a saint not through reading books of the ancient philosophers but through the grace of Christ.¹⁷³

173 Nasr, *Ideals*, p. 129. As regard the academic discussion of whether Sufism originated from Islam or from other traditions, the reader is referred to the works

171 Frederick Mathewson Denny. *An Introduction to Islam* (NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), 2nd ed., p. 222.

172 Schimmel points out that Western scholars are always skeptical about the spirituality of Muhammad. They perceived him until recently as a shrewd politician whose religion is considered heresy. (See Schimmel, *Mystical*, p. 27).

Nasr then concludes that the Sufis are the fruits of the spiritual tree of Islam and no tree can give fruit unless its roots are sunk in the soil that nourishes it.

Further, the early Sufis took Islam seriously and found compliance with Islamic laws (*Shari'ah*) to be necessary to being a Sufi. They did not believe that a Muslim could relate to God without following the laws of God as expressed in the *Shari'ah*. Thus, many Sufis are found to be scholars (*fugahs*) and theologians like Imam al-Ghazali, Hasan al-Basri, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilaani, al-Junayd and others. Actually, many of their activities were carried out at the mosque, the center of every activity. As pointed out before, Sufism is taking an extra step towards devotion so as to be loved by God.

Without participating in the *Shari'ah*, the life of the *tariqah* (Sufism) would be impossible and in fact the latter is interwoven in its practices and attitudes with the practices prescribed by the *Shari'ah*.¹⁷⁴

The Prophet Muhammad and his companions, who were considered to have lived the highest of spiritual lives, were upholders of Islamic law. They believed, practiced and applied it to their daily lives. They never disregarded the laws of *Allah* under any pretext. Rather, each one of them was judged as to what extent he adhered to the *Shari'ah*. On this, Hossein Nasr says:

The *Shari'ah* without the *tariqah* would be like a body without a soul, and the *tariqah* without the *Shari'ah* would be devoid of an external support and simply could not subsist and manifest itself in this world. For the totality of the tradition, one like the other is absolutely necessary.¹⁷⁵

The picture painted about the early Sufi was the epitome of total renunciation of this world. But that is not an accurate portrayal. What

the Sufi aimed at was keeping a balance between extreme indulgences in this material world and preparing for the next world. To Sufis, the earthly world is temporal and thus we are all in transit. A practical Muslim, in a Sufi's opinion, should not relax in it but rather use it as a preparative stage for the real destination—the next world and the Day of Judgment. They posited that true believers would be privileged to see the face of the Almighty God. The Sufi pioneers did not totally renounce this world, nor did they consider it the end in itself. They found that Muhammad, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Ali, and many others were heads of states and leaders. They married and had children, yet they never lost sight of their destination, the hereafter.

The Spread of Sufism in the Muslim World

If Sufism is understood as the development of the spiritual aspects of Islam, then Sufism spread with the expansion of Islam. Wherever Islam was introduced, Sufism was introduced simultaneously or shortly thereafter. In most cases, particularly after the first two centuries, Sufis were the carriers of Islam (*du'at*) to many distant places. Many Muslim reformers, past and present, had or received some sort of spiritual training and were affiliated with Sufi orders or movements. Of course, historians occasionally neglect this aspect of the spiritual lives of Muslim reformers because they take for granted that living a spiritual life is expected and normal. There is no reformer in Islam who does not pay attention to the science of behavior (*'ilm al-akhlaq*), the science of awakening the soul so as not to fall into heedlessness. At times, the word 'Sufism' has carried negative connotations in the minds of some orthodox believers; therefore, some scholars refrain from its use. But as Islam expanded and Muslim conquerors indulged in material gain, Sufi ideas won more currency and acceptance in the Muslim community.

It is stated that the first group of Sufis claimed to have emerged from the Prophet's mosque in Medina, the people of the bench (*ahl as-suffah*). At the beginning of the second century, Hasan al-Basri formed his own group in Iraq, which spread rapidly there because of its appeal to moral advancement. Within a short time, Hasan al-Basri's student Abdul Wahid ibn Zayd carried al-Basri's ideas of asceticism to Persia and formed a Sufi order in Abadan on the Persian Gulf. Abdul Wahid

of Hossein Nasr in *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, pp. 127-145; and Anneimaire Schimmel in *Mystical Dimension of Islam*, pp. 23-41; Frederick Denny in *An Introduction to Islam*, pp. 220-223.

¹⁷⁴ Nasr, *Ideals*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

himself had many disciples, among whom were Abu Sulayman al-Darani and his disciple Ahmad ibn Abil Hawari. These students spread al-Basri's ideas into Syria and its suburbs.¹⁷⁶ Sufi movements' members paid great attention to the daily practices of the Islamic religion, the five pillars. They took religious laws seriously.

When the Abbasid caliphs took over leadership of the Muslim world in 750 C. E., the emphasis on Sufism did not fade, rather, it flourished. Actually, the Abbasid propaganda advocated the return to the pristine time of the Prophet Muhammad and the renunciation of this world. Ironically, they were not better off than the Umayyad leaders whom they overthrew. Nonetheless, Sufism expanded rapidly both in Iraq and in new territories like Egypt and Khurasan. A number of great mystical leaders emerged and played highly influential roles in shaping the features of Sufism and spreading it to North Africa and India.

Among Sufi leaders of the 9th century were Thawban bin Ibrahim, known as Dhu Nun (d. 859), the Egyptian, Bayezid Bistami, the Iranian (d. 874), al-Harith al-Muhasibi, an Iraqi (d. 857), and al-Junayd, the Iranian (d. 910). The disciples of these great mystical leaders established schools and houses of gathering (*zawiyah*) for their own disciples and spread Sufi thought throughout the Muslim world. Some of these movements are still in existence today.¹⁷⁷ In North and West Africa, the Qadiriyyah movement won many followers. This movement was established by Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilaani, a Persian, who was born in 470/1077 C. E. and died in 561/1166 C. E.

The impact of Sufism in the spread of Islam in Africa cannot be understated. While there was a *Jihad* when Muslims were conquering Egypt into Islam by Amr ibn al-As in the seventh century, the spread of Islam in all West African countries was peaceful and not through *Jihad*, but through Sufi masters and Arab traders. The model behavior and the simplicity of Sufi life appealed to many Africans and led them to confess that Islam was their religion. Islam also spread in many areas in South East Asia through the Sufi orders.

Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio, who finally launched *Jihad* against the Hausas in Northern Nigeria at the beginning of the 19th century, was himself a member of the Qadiriyyah movement. He was not the one who introduced Islam to Nigeria; he was a reformer. His belief in Sufism

did not prevent him from spreading Islam and engaging in politics to promote Islam. One of his arguments for waging war against the Gobir people was their excessive indulgence in the material world and their oppression of the poor by imposing heavy taxes on their subjects in the name of Islam. Shaykh Dan Fodio considered such taxes to be unjust according to Islamic law.

What Do the Sufis Do?

Sufis are convinced that in order to have knowledge of the Absolute and become closer to God, a person must have a mentor who has traveled the path and succeeded. The mentor is the Master-*Murad*. The seeker is the Student-*Murid*, a disciple. The process of training under the leadership of a master is known as the path, the way, *Tariqah*. This path "represents a spiritual and moral education, a branch of a high way that consists of the God-given law (*Shari'ah*), on which every Muslim is supposed to walk."¹⁷⁸ In fact, Sufi masters do not claim to be guardians but mentors who advise their disciples on how to have a clear vision of their search, a purification of their soul, and on how to rid themselves of their self-ego or any other obstruction to recognizing reality as it is. "You're not responsible for guiding them; God guides whomsoever He wills" (*Qur'an* 2:272). A person who walks this path is called "the poor-*faqir*." This indicates the awareness of the seeker that he is poor and possesses nothing. God remains for him the Rich and through him everything exists. "And Allah is Rich and you are the poor." (*Qur'an* 47:38) A seeker wants to turn his will towards Allah and thus he must arm himself with the qualities of patience and perseverance in his journey to Allah.

The *Tariqah*, the Sufi way, is a method through which the disciple (*murid*), the one who has determined his will, learns the virtues of being upright. He is motivated to become a devout servant of Allah. The methods and doctrines are derived from the *Qur'an* itself and from the example of Prophet Muhammad. Hossein Nasr argues that learning Sufi doctrine is in essence the beginning and the end in itself. He compares the doctrine to the map of a mountain to be climbed. It guides the climber in reaching the top. The goal is like the intimate knowledge of the mountain gained through the actual experience of

176 Schimmel, *Mystical*, pp. 30-31.

177 Schimmel, *Mystical*, pp. 42-62.

178 Schimmel, *Mystical*, p. 98.

climbing the mountain.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, it is critical for a disciple to have a mentor who helps his student "to give birth to a true heart and nourish him with spiritual milk like a mother."¹⁸⁰ In this sense, he assists in opening the eyes of his students so that they can recognize reality as it is. Those who have no mentor are often misguided or have deviated from the right path. By so doing, they harm themselves and misguide those who follow them. Sufis believe that Satan guides him who has no master to guide him. "Whoever travels without a guide needs two hundred years for a two days journey."¹⁸¹

When a disciple joins the path (*Tariqah*), a master leads and encourages him towards devotion and worship, contemplation and remembrance of *Allah* (*dhikr*) so as to weed out from his heart all the imperfection and attachment to the self and to the material world. His focus must be on God and he must always keep his heart pure. However, as a disciple, he should not forget that he has two practices or rites: the basic rituals that are binding on all Muslims like daily prayers, fasting, supporting the poor, and performing *Hajj*, and the additional voluntary rites, which are not obligatory or required by the *Shari'ah*, but which he must perform such as extra voluntary prayers, fasting other than during Ramadan, and remembering God all the time.

The practice which a Sufi initiates differs from one movement to another and from one country to another. However, there are certain characteristics that underline all their practices and all who subscribe to Sufism must learn those qualities and develop them. In any Sufi movement, the primary goal of the *Tariqah* is to teach the disciple a means of relating or developing a relationship with *Allah*. This is done by creating His awareness in the minds of seekers to such an extent that it is as if he is seeing God, even though if he does not see God, God sees him, watches and guides him. Thus, the seeker lives as if he is always in the presence of the Divine, *Allah*.¹⁸² For a disciple to attain these qualities, he must surrender totally to the master in whom he has absolute and unconditional trust. He is trained and guided gradually until he is given permission to be himself. The period of training takes many years and also depends on the readiness and sincerity of the

disciple. Staying on the mystical path requires commitment, constant struggle, and total obedience to the master in what he (the disciple) likes and what he does not like.

Some of the important duties that a disciple must perform and uphold include the following: repentance (*taubah*), continuous striving in the cause of *Allah* (*mujahadah*), having trust in *Allah* (*tawakkul*), having fear of *Allah* (*taqwa*), developing the attitude of renunciation (*zuhd*), being content (*Qana'a*) with whatever is given to him by *Allah*, being patient (*sabr*), being vigilant (*muraqabah*) and being sincere in all his actions (*Ikhlas*). A short explanation will be given on each of the above qualities.

Primarily, a Sufi wants to become close to God. To achieve this, he strives to get rid of his sins through repentance. Repentance is turning away from sin, from that which is blameworthy to that which is praiseworthy.¹⁸³ Muslims believe that as humans they can sin and commit many mistakes. To become closer to God, one must repent and seek forgiveness from God, who has promised to pardon he who repents to Him. Seeking forgiveness entails three conditions that should be met, according to Sufis. They are:

- a) remorse for the sins that have been committed;
- b) immediate abandonment of the lapse by stopping sinning; and
- c) making a firm determination not to return to or commit similar acts of disobedience again.

When a Muslim meets these conditions and seeks forgiveness, his mistakes are forgiven. If the rights of other fellow human beings remain in his hand, he must return them to their owners before he seeks forgiveness.¹⁸⁴

Another quality of the Sufi is a continuous striving in opposing his lower self and desires (*Mujahadat al-Nafs*). That is, "weaning the soul of its habitual practices and compelling it to oppose its evil passions at all times."¹⁸⁵ Human minds, according to Sufis, tend to relax and settle for the minimal things, such as the enjoyment of its desires.

179 Nasr, *Ideals*, pp. 136.

180 Schimmel, *Mystical*, p. 103.

181 *Ibid.*

182 Nasr, *Ideals*, pp. 134.

183 Al-Qushayri, *Principles of Sufism*, p. 2.

184 *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

185 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Sufis think that it is difficult for the soul to conform to God's wishes without struggling and fighting against one's self-ego. Sufi masters agree that the two best means of controlling and taming one's lower self are through voluntary fasting and offering extra prayers during the night.¹⁸⁶ Obeying one's desire often turns one away from God, which should be the focus of the seeker. Also, blindly following one's desires makes one lose sight of the afterlife. "And for those who strive for our sake, we will certainly guide them to our paths, God is with those who do right," (*Qur'an* 29:69; 79:40).

Further, the seeker is expected to have complete trust in *Allah* (*tawakkul*). This means seeking and relying on God for everything and on any condition. He lays his destiny in the hands of God. He recognizes that good and bad come from Him for the benefit of the servant. Therefore, he is content with whatever God does. When good things occur to him, he thanks God. When bad things befall him, he complains not, rather he is patient. He surrenders to the flow of destiny and sees God's hand in whatever happens believing that whatever has been destined for a believer cannot possibly miss him.

The seeker adds to his trust in God the fear of God (*taqwa*). This means that "*Allah* should be obeyed and not be disobeyed, remembered but not forgotten, and thanked not become an object of ingratitude."¹⁸⁷ God is feared and obeyed because He deserves to be worshipped and feared. This awareness protects one from God's punishment by means of complying with what He wants. It motivates him towards fulfilling his duties towards God. This fear of God, however, is accompanied by the hope of His mercy. Hope in Sufi thought consists of having a positive and good attitude towards God. It is relying on the favors of God and His mercy towards his beloved ones, for God in Islam is a loving God, full of mercy. God's unconditional love and overwhelming mercy for His creatures always overrides His wrath and anger.

Sufis also focus on life after death. They yearn to be with their beloved, God, face-to-face. They renounce this material world to gain the next world. Renunciation of the world (*zuhd*) marks the beginning of the struggle for the Sufis. By renunciation, they mean the attempt to curtail attachment to the gains of this world. They believe

186 Schimmel, *Mystic Dimensions*, p. 114

187 Al-Qushayri, *Principles*, pp. 27

that everything in the world is temporal and that clinging to worldly gain is meaningless. Sufis believe the enjoyment that a person derives from worldly gain is incomparable to what a true believer receives in the next world. God states: "Say little is the enjoyment of this world, the hereafter is best for those who fear God." (*Qur'an* 4:77) It is the renunciation of the material world that led in the beginning to the emergence and formation of the Sufi path.

One of the qualities that Sufis require of a seeker is sincerity (*ikhlas*). It is an absolute awareness of God and having Him as one's goal in whatever a seeker proposes (in action, word, and deed). Sincerity is to turn to God wholeheartedly. Nothing should be done by the seeker without his full intention to do it for the sake of God. In other words, it is the purifying of one's actions of any awareness of fellow creatures, protecting oneself from the concerns that men have to show-off.¹⁸⁸ It is also "the giving up of selfish thoughts in the service of God."¹⁸⁹ Sincerity comes when one is aware that God is watchful of all one's deeds. Any deed performed without sincerity, even if they are required, like daily prayers, has no good reward in Islam, particularly when they are done to gain human attention or recognition. Sufis lay paramount importance on the quality of sincerity (*ikhlas*) and consider it the utmost quality that must be possessed by a seeker, for it yields vigilant awareness of God in the mind and enables him to worship God as if he is seeing him. God says in the *Qur'an* 39:3, "Is it not to God that sincere devotion is due?" "Say truly, my prayer, my service of sacrifice, my life and my death are (all) for God, the cherisher of the Worlds."¹⁹⁰ Thus, every act of a believer and of the Sufi, in particular, must always be done for the sake of God alone.

Another foundation of the Sufi path is the act of remembrance (*dhikr*). It is the most important element in reaching God, for no one can truly become a friend of God without remembering Him. God says in the *Qur'an*: "O you who believe, remember God always" (*Qur'an* 33:41). "Is it not with the remembrance of God that the heart becomes calm? For without doubt, in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction" (*Qur'an* 33:28). Remembrance (*dhikr*) is of two types: remembrance by tongue through repeating the beautiful

188 Al-Qushayri, pp. 186.

189 Schimmel, *Mystic Dimensions*, pp. 108.

190 *Qur'an* ch 6:162.

names of *Allah* (*asma' Allah al-Husna*) and remembrance of the heart. This latter is the awareness of God in one's heart at all times and the absence of forgetfulness of God. Al-Qushayri, a Sufi scholar, mentions that one of the qualities of remembrance of God (*Dhikr*) is that it can be done at any time and in any place. It is not limited to any particular time, or to the hours of daily prayers. "Remembrance of the heart," he says, "is continually in all conditions."¹⁹¹ Then he quotes the *Qur'an* 3:191, "Those who make remembrance of God while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides." God also says, "Make remembrance of me and I will make remembrance of you." (*Qur'an* 2:147). Sufis are convinced that the hearts of seekers must be occupied with the remembrance of God at all times and that that is what distinguishes them from non-seekers, whose hearts are full of forgetfulness of the one true God, *Allah*.

Sufis also take pride in teaching initiates the formula for *dhikr* (remembrance of God). At times, this remembrance is done individually, and at times it is performed in group. Some orthodox Muslim scholars object to this group gathering of *Dhikr*. They argue that group remembrance is unacceptable practice because Prophet Muhammad, his immediate disciples and the pious forbears (*Salaf-Salih*) did not practice group performance of (*Dhikr*). However, Sufis pay little attention to such objection; they claim that the *Qur'an* instructs believers to remember God in all conditions without extremism (*Qur'an* 17:110). Ironically, it is this same verse that opponents cite when condemning a group for loud repetition of the name of God in public.

The Sufi Pioneers

Islamic history is full of great personalities and great Sufi leaders. Some of them did not consider themselves Sufis but only devout Muslims. Reference will be made in this section to a few of them.

- a) Abu Dharr al-Ghifari;
- b) Hasan al-Basri;
- c) Abd al-Qadir al-Gilani; and
- d) Ahmad al-Tijani and
- e) Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse Kaolack of Senegal.

Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari

Abu Dharr al-Ghifari was one of the companions of the Prophet who is considered an early Sufi.¹⁹² He was from the tribe of Ghifar. In his youth, he did not admire the worship of the idols, which his tribe adored. When he heard about the appearance of a Prophet at Mecca, he went and met Prophet Muhammad. After their first meeting, he converted to Islam. He was among the first ten Muslims who followed Muhammad. He invited his tribe, al-Ghifar, to Islam. Many of them accepted Islam through him and later journeyed to Medina. In Medina, Abu Dharr devoted his time to learning about Islam and serving the Prophet. He was one of the most beloved persons to and great supporter of Prophet Muhammad.

In one of the battles at *Ghazwat Tabuk*, Prophet Muhammad predicted that Abu Dharr would live and die alone (meaning away from people). That prediction came true. In another report, the Prophet asked Abu Dharr about what he would do if he were to live long and see Muslim leaders living in palaces and gardens with abundant wealth. Abu Dharr responded that he would discourage them and advise them to renounce the material world through his sword. Then the Prophet advised him to be patient with them until he meets with him in paradise. Abu Dharr took this advice and never fought anyone thereafter.

Abu Dharr keenly felt the absence of Prophet Muhammad when he died. He traveled to Syria and lived there during the reign of Abu Bakr and Umar, the first and second caliphs of Islam. When Uthman assumed the caliphate, Mu'awiyah was appointed the governor of Syria. Abu Dharr found Mu'awiyah and his government to be extravagant and oppressive to Muslims. He was horrified by the materialism of the Muslims in Damascus and their preoccupation with worldly matters. Abu Dharr denounced them publicly and disapproved of their ways of life. He had meetings with Mu'awiyah himself and warned him about the plight of those who cared less about life after death. He condemned the Umayyad's policies and distribution of wealth in Damascus whereby some Muslims became extremely rich while the majority was extremely poor. The masses began to rally around Abu Dharr, which led Mu'awiyah to launch a complaint against him to Caliph Uthman bin Affan in Medina. Uthman requested that Abu Dharr return to 192 d. 653.

191 Al-Qushayri, *Principles*, pp. 209.

Medina, which he did. Eventually, Abu Dharr was completely unhappy with what he saw and found in Medina. Since he did not want to fight with his sword, he spoke against the irregularities at Medina and Muslims' indulgence in the material world. His criticism was not well-received. The people of Medina were uncomfortable with his criticism and strictness in religious matters.

However, he asked permission from Uthman bin Affan to live alone in the suburb of Medina called *Rabdhah*. He moved there and spent the rest of his life there in seclusion, far away from other people. He paid no attention to material wealth, which he considered a hindrance to a true and spiritual life. Abu Dharr belonged to the Sufis who denounced the world. He frequently quoted "Give good news to the hoarders of wealth that they would be wrapped with iron fire on the Day of Judgment."¹⁹³ Abu Dharr strongly believed that many Muslims strayed away from the right path, particularly after the reign of Umar, the second caliph. He declined political position in Iraq and declared this life to be transitional and a prison for true believers.

Someone recounted visiting Abu Dharr in *Rabdhah* and found no possessions with him. "Where are your possessions?" the man asked. "We have another home elsewhere and we have sent all our good things there," replied Abu Dharr. "But do you not need some things as long as you are living in this home here?" asked the man, who had realized that Abu Dharr meant that his real home was the afterlife. "The landlord is not going to allow us to stay here for long," answered Abu Dharr.¹⁹⁴ "Hence, we do not have to keep our belongings here."

In another report, a friend of Abu Dharr met him and asked why he always wore the same cloth. "Do you have another cloth?" he queried. "May Allah forgive you," Abu Dharr answered, "you exaggerate this world. Don't you see this cloak on me? I have another one for Friday prayer; I have a goat, which I milked and a donkey, which I rode. Is there any blessing more than what we possess?" he taunted his friend.

When Abu Dharr was asked why he lived an ascetic life, he responded that it was the real life, as he understood from Prophet Muhammad. "My friend, Muhammad, had taught me seven things," he smiled,

- a) that I should love the poor people and be close to them;
- b) that I should always look to those people who are below me so as to express my thanks to God and not look to those who possess more wealth than I do;
- c) that I should not ask for anything from anyone, for they do not possess anything. I should always ask God, the Provider;
- d) that I should help, be kind and generous to my relatives;
- e) that I should always tell the truth, even if it is bitter;
- f) that I should not fear the accusation of criticism of anyone whenever I do or say something for the cause of God; and
- g) that I should always rely on God.

Abu Dharr kept this advice throughout his life.

He died in *Rabdhah* near Medina alone. Members of an unknown caravan passing by *Rabdhah* learned first about his death. They stopped by his house, washed and buried him. He died in 653 C. E. We do not know the exact date of his birth. To Abu Dharr, this world is a sowing field for the next world; one should work hard here to reap the harvest there. He was known to be courageous, learned, and generous to the poor. Whatever he had, he distributed to the needy and retained only that which would sustain his life.

Abu al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin al-Junayd, al-Khazzaz

Another great Sufi master who appeared at the end of the 9th century in Baghdad was Abu al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin al-Khazzaz, known as al-Junayd. He was born in Nihawand in Persia but grew up in Baghdad. He was a nephew and disciple of another great Sufi, Sari al-Saqati. Al-Junayd received his Islamic knowledge and learned of the sciences in Baghdad. He specialized in Islamic law from the Shafi'i School of Law. He studied Sufism under al-Muhasibi and spent his early life seeking knowledge and spiritual training. He became a great orthodox Sufi who combined the practice of Islamic law with Sufi life. He trained many Sufis and had numerous disciples.

¹⁹³ Khalid Muhammad Khalid, *Rijal Hawla ar-Rasul* pp. 79.

¹⁹⁴ Abdur-Rahman al-Basha, Vol. 1, 1, pp. 111-112.

Sufi doctrinal order was developed by al-Junayd, who was highly respected and given the title of Shaykh al-Mashaikh (the teacher of all teachers). The development of the concept of annihilation (*fana*) in the love of God is attributed to him. Al-Junayd was of the opinion that "since all things have their origin in God, they must finally return, after their dispersion (*tafriq*) to live again with Him (*Jami*); this mystical life is achieved in the state of passing away (*fana*)."¹⁹⁵ He advocated that a Sufi who is a true seeker must strive to return everything to God and concentrate on Him alone, for the qualities of the beloved (God) should replace the qualities of the lover (*muhib*).¹⁹⁶ Annihilation (*fana*) should not be the primary goal of a Sufi, but a step toward reaching a new life and a new relationship with God, which is *Baqa*. That is, annihilation in the sense of removing everything that prevents a true servant from being related to God at any given time and the occupation of the heart with thoughts of God.¹⁹⁷ To al-Junayd, Sufism can only be described as:

Purification of the heart from the recurrence of creaturely temptations subduing the qualities which, being to human nature, saying farewell to all the natural inclinations, keeping far away from the claims of the senses, adhering to spiritual qualities, ascending by means of Divine knowledge, being occupied which that which is eternally the best, giving wise counsel to all people, faithfully observing the truth and following the Prophet (pbuh) in respect of the religious law.¹⁹⁸

This is how al-Junayd understood Sufism: it is a marriage between *Shari'ah* and spirituality.

Al-Junayd wrote many books on Sufism among which are the book on Unity of God (*Kitab at-Tawhid*), book on Annihilation (*Kitab al-Fana*), a book on the remedy for souls (*Kitab Dawa al-Arwah*) and many others. He died in 910 C. E. leaving behind a great legacy and numerous disciples who spread his Sufi ideas. He was considered one

195 Krammer and Gibb, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 93, S.V. Djunaïd.

196 Shaykh Fadlalla Haeri, *The Elements of Sufism*, pp. 97.

197 Schimmel, *Mystic Dimensions*, pp. 59.

198 Margaret Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, pp. 34.

of the greatest Sufis in Baghdad and is credited with laying down the structure of Sufism.¹⁹⁹

Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (1077-1166 C. E.) (470-561 A. H.)

Shaykh Abd al-Qadir was born in Gilan, Iran, in 470/1077 C. E. He lost his father at an early age and received his early education from his mother and his maternal grandfather. At age 17, he went to Baghdad, Iraq, to undertake Islamic studies in theology, law, philosophy, and other sciences. After completing his formal education, he acquired spiritual training by learning from a number of Sufi leaders of his time, particularly Shaykh Abu Said Mukharriimi. He spent and devoted several years to asceticism and self-discipline until he attained enlightenment (*al-wusul*). Later, he settled down in Baghdad and devoted the rest of his life to spreading Islam and teaching Sufism to many disciples. His assistance to the poor and the deprived is legendary. His followers narrated many interesting stories about his generosity, simplicity, patience, and unconditional love for all people. It was reported that many Christians and Jews converted to Islam in Baghdad through him. People from all spheres of life, kings, scholars, Sufis, laymen, men and women attended his lectures.

Abd al-Qadir was considered one of the greatest orators; he always attracted huge audiences of 7,000 to 8,000 people at his public lectures, which he gave twice a week. His eloquence and persuasive method enabled him to free people from excessive engrossment in material pursuit by awakening their spiritual sensibilities.²⁰⁰

Abd al-Qadir was the founder of the Qadiriyyah order, which was later spread to the Muslim world, particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia. The primary goal of this order was to show people the way to God and how to be serviceable to God's creatures. It was during his life that the conflict between the exponents of *Shari'ah* and *Tariqah* (spiritualism) came to a deadlock and the idea of religious rationalism (as understood by the Mu'tazilites) struck the Muslim world. Having had in-depth knowledge of both Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) and Sufism (spiritual development), Abd al-Qadir struck a balance between the two extremes—the spiritualism of Mansur al-Khala and the rationalism of

199 *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 93.

200 Nast, *Islamic Spiritualism*, pp. 6.

the Mu'tazilites. His fame during this period reached incredible heights. Consequently, he was nicknamed "the reviver of the religion" (*Muhyi-al-Din*). Being himself a strict observer of Islamic law, he demanded a strict adherence from his disciples to it, as well. "This approach," says Khaliq A Nizami,

...not only bridged the gulf between the jurists (*fuqaha*) and the mystics (Sufis) but also created a balance between varying degrees of emphasis laid on the spirit and the letter of Islamic law.²⁰¹

Abd al-Qadir was a distinguished scholar who wrote many books on religion and mysticism. Among his works is *Ghunyat al-Talibin* (*That which is sufficient for the seekers of the Truth*). It is a treatise on Islamic law and mystical thought. It was written by dictation and as such there are many editorial mistakes and gaps in it. However, the work details what a student should know about the basic tenets of the religion of Islam, the moral ethics that must be followed in a Muslim's daily life and guidance to those who want to lead a spiritual life. His other work is *Futuh al-Ghayb* (*Victories of the Invisible*). It is a record of seventy-eight sermons given by Abd al-Qadir which his son Abd al-Razzaq recorded. It deals with different topics with an emphasis on strengthening one's relationship with God. Another work entitled *Faith al-Rabbani* contains a record of forty sermons delivered by Abd al-Qadir in the year 545/1150 C. E. It is said that he left more than twenty-four books behind.

In his work *Ghunyat al-Talibin*, Abd al-Qadir spelled out the principles that must be followed by those who want to live a pious life. Emphasis is laid on ten important things:

- 1) Abstaining from speaking ill of an absent person;
- 2) Refraining from developing a suspicious attitude against anybody;
- 3) Abstaining from gossip and whispering;
- 4) Abstaining from things prohibited;
- 5) Uttering the truth at all times;

- 6) Expressing gratitude to God for all his blessings;
- 7) Spending money to help the poor and those who deserve help;
- 8) Abstaining from running after worldly power and status;
- 9) Offering five daily prayers regularly; and
- 10) Following the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad and cooperating with Muslims.²⁰²

After the death of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir in 1166 C. E., his sons and disciples spread the Qadiriyyah order to different parts of the Muslim world. To this day, the Qadiriyyah movement is one of the longest-lived Sufi orders in Islamic history. The movement continues to win members due to its emphasis on community service, a strong sense of co-operation and support among its members, and networking. It appeals to Muslims because it never undermines the importance of observing the five basic pillars of Islam. It encourages people to take care of the deprived and enhances the spiritual development of every individual. To Abd al-Qadir, Sufism is "to truly realize God, to show people the way to God, and to bring happiness to disturbed hearts and disgraced souls."²⁰³

Shaykh Ahmad (Amadou) Bamba of Senegal (1850-1927)

Shaykh Ahmad (Amadou) Bamba, a Muslim saint and the founder of the Mouridiyyah order, was born in Senegal, West Africa, in 1850. He received his Islamic education from his father and his uncle, Mouhammadou Bouso. Bamba admired Sufism and was initiated into the Qadiriyyah order but he gradually and systematically established his own order. In 1905, the Mouridiyyah was established. The Mouridiyyah order focuses on *Qur'anic* recitation, long prayers and the remembrance of God (*dhikr*). Bamba's disciples claimed that he had performed numerous miracles. His order attracted many followers, especially the Wolof people of Senegal, who had been dehumanized by French colonial rule and its injustices. He refused to work for the Senegalese kings and chiefs whom he perceived to be "the instruments

201 Khaliq Ahmed Nizami, *The Qadiriyyah Order*, pp. 6; *Islamic Spirituality Manifestations*, ed. By S. Hossein Nasr, 1991.

202 Nizami in *Islamic Spirituality*, edited by Nasr.

203 Ibid., pp. 24.

of Satan" because of their collaboration with the French imperialist government in Senegal.

Bamba demanded total obedience to him from his followers and to the Mouridiyyah's leaders, as well. His disciples found in his spiritual teachings a sense of belonging and alignment with African culture. He was a charismatic religious leader whose prayers were answered. His simple lifestyle, devotion, and his love and care for the poor attracted many followers. As his influence grew, French administrators in Senegal became worried. The French exiled Bamba to Gabon, Congo for seven years and to Mauritania for several years. He survived the French persecutions and returned to Senegal to spread his Mouridiyyah movement. He united his people through his Sufi order.

Bamba was a devout Sufi of high character. He introduced his own special prayer (litany - *wird*) in 1912 while in Mauritania. His litany (*wird*) focuses on intensive prayers and praises of Prophet Muhammad. He initiated many disciples into the Mouridiyyah order, including women. Bamba was a man of peace who spent his time in devotion, reading, writing and teaching Islam. He wrote a few books on Islam, especially on prayers.

Bamba encouraged his followers to be economically independent. He considered hard work a religious duty and a means of appreciating God's blessings. The Mouridiyyah members engage in agriculture and trade; they network among themselves. They also engage in import and export businesses on local, national and international levels. Due to this financial independence, they are free from the threat and financial pressure of French colonial invaders.

Bamba died in 1927 and left behind a legacy: a community of loving people, hard working individuals, who deeply care for one another. Bamba's teachings emphasize humility, peace, hard work and self reliance. Mouridiyyah members are found today in Africa, Europe, and North America. Those in Europe and North America assist those who are in Senegal by sending money home. They continue to revere Bamba and make pilgrimages to his tomb in Touba, Senegal; they consider him a saint (*walidyy Allah*).²⁰⁴

204 For more information about Ahmad Bamba, see the following:

Harrison, Christopher, *France and Islam in West Africa 1860-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); O'Brien, Donal, Cruise, *The Morides of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood*

Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse Kaolack, 1902- 1975

Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse, leader of the Tijaniyyah Sufi order in West Africa, was born in Senegal in 1902. He memorized the *Qur'an* and studied traditional Islamic sciences under his father, Abdullah. Niasse became the Tijaniyyah spiritual leader (*Khalifah*) after his father's death in 1922. He was initiated into the Tijaniyyah order at a very young age and traveled widely throughout West Africa to spread it. His visit to Kano, Nigeria, in 1945 on invitation by the Emir of Kano was pivotal in the history of the Tijaniyyah in West Africa. There he met new disciples, initiated new members, both men and women, gave lectures, and granted *baraka* (blessings) to many people. The visit enhanced the Tijaniyyah movement and its growth in Nigeria. Nonetheless, it caused great havoc because of its rivalry with the Qadiriyyah order, which was in practice in the Sokoto area, Nigeria. The Tijaniyyah leaders (*khalifas*) are known to have possessed secret prayers (*awrad*), which they exchange among their followers through junior spiritual leaders (*muqaddams*).

Niasse strongly encouraged the education of men and women and insisted that both receive solid Islamic knowledge and modern science. He advised his members to learn foreign languages. Women are initiated into the Tijaniyyah order and a few of them hold leadership positions as *muqaddamah* (women's junior leader). Niasse traveled widely in the Muslim world and met many African leaders, such as Abd Nasir of Egypt, Nkruma of Ghana, and Ahmad Bello of Nigeria. His relationship with them was based on mutual understanding and interdependence. He received numerous honorary awards for his contributions to Islam. Niasse played effective roles in Senegalese politics as he pressed for social justice and equality for all Senegalese. His followers vote and hold many political positions in the government even today. He required them to be devoted, obedient, attached to a spiritual leader (*muqaddam*) and responsible and accountable for their own actions. However, his members believe that their spiritual

Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Rosander, Eva Evans and Westerlund, David, "Senegal," Pp. 77-96 in *Islam Outside the Arab World*, ed. by David Westerlund and Ingvar Swanberg, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Viker, S. Knut, "Sufi Brotherhoods in Africa," Pp. 441-476 in *The History of Islam in Africa*, edited by Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

junior leaders (*muqaddam*) possess special blessings and can perform miracles.

Niasse was well-educated and did write some books on Islam. He and those he appointed as his representatives inducted millions of people into the Tijaniyyah order. Niasse died in July 1975, at Kaolack, which became similar to Mecca for his disciples. They visit Kaolack to serve their current leaders and earn blessings (*baraka*) from them.²⁰⁵

Other Sufi Movements

There are many Sufi orders in the Muslim world today. Each group or order has its own characteristics and appeals to different groups and audiences. There are also Sufi orders in the United States, particularly in Philadelphia, New York, and Los Angeles. The following are a few Sufi orders/movements in the Muslim world with the names of their leaders:

- The Rifa'iyyah order founded by Shaykh Ahmad ar-Rifa'i (d. 1182) in Basra, Iraq. This movement has followers in Egypt, Syria, Anatolia in Turkey, Eastern Europe and North America.
- The Shadhiliyyah order founded by Shaykh Abu al-Hasan as-Shadhili (d. 1258) in Morocco. It has followers in Egypt, Kenya, Middle East, Sri-Lanka, North Africa, and North America.
- The Mevlavi order founded by Mawlana Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi in Turkey (d. 1273). It has most followers in Anatolia in Turkey and in North America. Its members are known as "Whirling Dervishes."
- The Naqshabandi order founded by Shaykh Bahauddin an-Naqshabandi of Bukhara (d. 1390). It has followers in central Asia, the Volga, the Caucasus, the North-West and South-West of China, Indonesia, the Indian sub-continent, Turkey, Europe and North America.
- The Ni'matullah order founded by Shaykh Nur ad-Din Muhammad Ni'matullah (d. 1431) in Mahan near Kirman in South West Iran. It has followers in Iran and India.

205 For more information, see footnotes on Ahmad Bamba.

- The Tijaniyyah order founded by Shaykh Abbas Ahmad al-Tijani, an Algerian Berber (d. 1815). It has followers in Algeria, North America, Western and Northern Africa, Egypt, Senegal, West Africa and North America.
- The Chisti order founded by Khawaja Abu Ishaq Shami Chisti (d. 966). It has followers in South-East Asia and North America.²⁰⁶

Critique of the Sufis

Sufism has been the subject of high praise by many Muslims in the past and at present. Western scholars also pay great attention to Sufism. They write extensively about Sufi doctrines, explain their goals, and interpret their works into different Western languages. However, some of them allege that Sufism was borrowed from other traditions. They argue that a religion like Islam, which emerged from the Bedouin Arabs, could not produce respected scholars like al-Ghazali, al-Khallaj, or Ibn al-Arabi. They also tend to praise those Sufis who adhere less to the *Shari'ah* such as Ibn al-Arabi, al-Khallaj, Ibn al-Farid, and a few others. Critics say these Sufis were free thinkers. Despite all the praise lavished upon Sufis and their movements, a number of Sunni Muslim scholars condemn Sufism and its practices mainly on the grounds that they (Sufis) are innovators (*Mubtadiun*).²⁰⁷

Among the allegations against Sufis is the idea that they are practicing what the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate companions did not practice. They strive to be in unity with God rather than to be His obedient servants only. They give their own interpretations to the revealed text (*Qur'an*) by claiming that it has both obvious and latent meanings (*zahir* and *batini*), which can only be understood by the elect - the Sufis. They concentrate on the love of God rather than fearing Him. They are also accused of not properly upholding the tenets of Islam or adhering to the *Shari'ah*, which some of them think is less important than the development of personal spirituality. Sufis are

206 For more information, see: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, *The Elements of Sufism*, ch. 3 on Sufi Brotherhood.

207 Innovation in Islamic term is to do something not approved by Islamic law or not practiced by the Prophet and his immediate followers. Hence, innovation is an act of deviation from the norm.

suspected of promoting passivism through their continuous appeal to their members to withdraw and renounce this world by concentrating on the next world.

The Wahabbis, a religious movement founded by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab that advocates the return to the pristine Islam as practiced by Prophet Muhammad in 7th century, allege that the Sufis are innovators (*mu'tadiun*) because they are doing what the Prophet and his immediate companions did not do through the practice of public gathering for the remembrance of God, and giving new and secret interpretations to the *Qur'an*.²⁰⁸ They allege that the Sufis are trying to free themselves from the observance of the prescribed prayers by setting for themselves a specific meditation gathering (*halaqat al-dhikr*) at the expense of the daily prayers.

The Sufi response to this allegation is that the many Sufis are devout Muslims who pay great attention to the practice of Islam and to the *Shari'ah* in particular. Many Sufis are respected for their in-depth knowledge of Islam and commitment to the service of humanity. True Sufis will not deny the *Shari'ah*. The early Sufis were firmly rooted in the science of *Shari'ah*. Professor Nasr argues that real Sufis never attempt to break the *Shari'ah*.²⁰⁹ He also adds that the *Shari'ah* "is the divine law by virtue of whose acceptance man becomes a Muslim. Without participating in the *Shari'ah*, the life of the tariqah (*tasawwuf*) would be impossible."²¹⁰ Reference is made to a number of Muslim scholars who are recognized as representatives of orthodox scholars, but are also Sufi masters who have many disciples, like Hasan al-Basri, Imam al-Junayd, Ibrahim bin-Adham, Imam al-Ghazali, Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Shadhili, Shah Waliyyullah of India, Ahmad Bamba of Senegal, and Shaykh Uthman Dan Fodio of Nigeria. Nasr concludes that many of the uncritical pronouncements and sayings attributed to some Sufi masters, which on the surface seem to negate the *Shari'ah*, have been taken out of context. Rather, they should be understood only within the context in which they are said.²¹¹

However, while there are many Sufis who practice Islam and pattern their daily lives according to the tenets of Islam, there are others whose

goals were not to be servants of God, but to be in unity with God and thus they do not follow the religious rites of Islam or *Shari'ah*, which they consider to be obstacles to the truth.

To be known by God is thus, mysteriously, to be God, because if the Divinity knows everything, it follows that the Divinity must be everywhere, for in the absolute oneness, there is no separate polarity between subject and object, between knower and known.²¹²

This idea of becoming united with God, that God is in everything and that everything amounts to God in the final analysis, is exactly what orthodox Muslim scholars object to. They argue that such ideas of unification elevate human beings to the status of God. Hence, a Muslim becomes a rival to God instead of being an obedient servant of God. Orthodox Sunni scholars further argue that any attempt to unite oneself with God implies that a human becomes divine. Sunni scholars are claiming that anyone who considers himself in unity with God has committed a grave sin of *Shirk*, making an association with God. The great Sufi al-Khallaj was convicted and put to death on the ground that he claimed to be one with God. "*Under Islamic law al-Khallaj is guilty. According to his inner reality, Allah knows,*" signed Imam al-Junayd (who was also a Sufi) but endorsed the execution of al-Khallaj. Islam, the Sunnis assert, amounts to complete submission to God and not to become God himself, for no human being can become God.

Some Sufis are also charged with passivism, the idea of having an unhealthy reliance on God (*tawakkul*). This reliance may encourage some students (*murid*) not to work, act rationally or do what they are supposed to do. Schimmel mentions the case of a Sufi who fell into the Tigris River. He was asked whether he wanted to be saved. He answered no. He was then asked if he wanted to die. He responded negatively, asserting that he had no decision to make since God has known and decreed what would happen to him.²¹³ Many Sufis as well as orthodox scholars condemn the concept of passivism on the ground that a Muslim should take necessary cause/steps to attain his goals in this

208 Shorter, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 99, 581

209 Nasr, *Ideals*, pp. 125.

210 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

211 *Ibid.*, 124.

212 Ling, pp. 65.

213 Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 199.

life. They also quote the story of a Bedouin who visited Muhammad. On his arrival to Medina he wanted to leave his camel untied outside the Mosque. Then Prophet Muhammad told him to tie his camel. The man questioned why he should tie his camel if God could protect it? The Prophet responded that he should tie it first and then rely on God. On that basis, Muslim scholars argue that God has endowed human beings with perfect faculties and rationality, which they must utilize for their own benefit. People are responsible for their actions.

Some of the other charges made against Sufis also are that of complacency, stagnation, and the practice of superstitions. While many Sufi leaders in the past were scholars, a great number of them in the later centuries were ignorant about the *Shari'ah*, particularly in Asia and West Africa. Rather than studying Islamic sciences through formal education, they rely on secret knowledge which they believe will be given to them through their Shaykh (spiritual leaders). And since they have no adequate knowledge of Islam, they are misguided and in turn misguide their followers. Also, many Sufi leaders are blamed for being venerated by their followers, who follow them blindly. They, at times, worship these leaders by elevating them to the status of an intermediary (*shafi'*) between them and God. Thus, they direct their prayers to those leaders, make vows with their names, and even perform pilgrimage to their tombs. They strongly believe that their prayers at the tombs will definitely be granted due to the virtue of their leaders before God. Orthodox Sunnis regard all these practices or beliefs as deviations from the pristine message of Islam, which emphasizes a total submission to God. Only God alone should be asked for any assistance, not other human beings. Even the Prophet Muhammad should not be asked for help because he was a human being, too. A true understanding of the concept of (*tawhid*), the unity of God, implies that God alone should be worshipped and He alone should be sought for assistance.

The above are some of the criticisms made against Sufis and Sufism. The Sufis refute these allegations and assert that they are true followers of Islam, true defenders of Islamic laws, true promoters and champions of its spread in many countries all over the world.

Summary:

To most Sufis, Sufism is a means of getting close to God, the development of one's soul, detachment from the material world and striving to live in the presence of God at all times. As Ibn Ajiba (d. 1809) puts it:

Sufism is a science by means of which you learn how to behave in order to be in the presence of the ever present Lord through purifying your inner being and sweetening it with good actions. The path of Sufism begins as a science, its middle is action and its end is divine gift.²¹⁴

The Sufis trace their origins back to the Prophet Muhammad through Ali Bin Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin. They consider scholars like Hasan al-Basri, Rabi'ah al-Adawiyyah, Ibrahim bin Adham, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilaani, and Ahmad al-Tijani as their role models in their path to God. They insist that their ideas, spirituality and activities are derived from the revelation, the *Qur'an* and from the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. They claim that Islam came to draw human beings back to God and as such the ticket to win God's love is to renounce this world and prepare true believers for the eternal life in the hereafter.

However, the validity of Sufism has become very controversial among some Muslim scholars. There are those who completely accept every aspect of Sufism; there are those who reject it totally; and there are those who take the middle path. The latter group asserts that there are certain things that are good in Sufism, particularly the development of spirituality, the improvement of the soul and weaning oneself from attachment to the lower qualities of the self. At the same time, there are other aspects of Sufism that are objectionable, like disregard for the *Shari'ah*, the venerating of Sufi leaders, or elevating them to a status higher than those of the Prophets. These critics allege that Sufis look with contempt upon the natural laws, which are necessary and essential to the building of human society. Of course, there is no doubt that the early Sufis were firmly grounded in the *Shari'ah*, but that later generations and many of the disciples of Sufi

214 Haeri, pp. 2-3.

leaders today lack that which motivated the early Sufis to see themselves as protectors of Islam and as servants to the community.

Finally, there are those who say we should not judge from the name alone, but look to the activities of those who claim to be Sufis. If what they do conforms to the tenets of Islam and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his disciples, then they should not be condemned. If their motives and actions are found contradictory to Islam, like the belief that they see God in their dreams, they should be judged accordingly. When a Sufi begins to follow his instincts and whims rather than submitting to the laws of Almighty God as revealed in the *Qur'an*, he is departing from Islam. Al-Hujwiri says:

Anyone who intentionally abandons the Law of Islam and commits an irreligious act and says that he is following the rule of the game is guilty of manifest wrong and wickedness and self-indulgence.²¹⁵

Sufism has become part and parcel of Islam and any controversy over its validity will never be settled as long as there are Muslims on earth. Sufi orders may witness growth or decline but they will never disappear as long as human souls are in search of their creator, *Allah*. The Sufi roles in spreading Islam and fighting against colonial governments can never be dismissed. At the same time, Sufis always adapt to the environments of the nations in which they live. On that ground, Shaykh FadlAllah Haeri says:

One observable trend in the history of Sufism has been that whenever there has been a lack of Islamic source material, such as the *Qur'an* or the original way of Muhammad, within a Sufi Order, then it has tended to be dominated by the stronger and older culture of its environment. This adulteration is noticeable in the Chisti Order of South East Asia and in the Sufi Orders of Indonesia, which have integrated many elements of Hindu and Buddhist customs into their practices. Similarly, the Sufi Orders of Africa below the region of Sudan have integrated some of the African

tribal religious customs into their practices. All these Sufi orders seem to have taken on some of the color of cultishness in these remote regions.²¹⁶

Suggested Readings:

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215 Al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, as quoted by F. Denny, *Introduction to Islam*, pp. 236.

216 Haeri, p. 3.

Chapter VIII

Islam and Women

Introduction

Nothing draws Western people, especially Americans, into discussion about Islam and Muslims more easily than the appearance of a Muslim woman with a scarf (*hijab*) on her head. Often times, seeing the *hijab* triggers misinformation about Islam that they have been wrongly fed by the media over the years- that all Muslim women are oppressed; that they are forced to cover their heads, believe in Islam and obey their husbands. Many Americans are simply unaware of the fact that most Muslim women cover their heads by choice. Professor John Esposito at Georgetown University, Washington D.C, rightly expresses it,

Women in Muslim societies have been the subject of images and generalizations, romantic orientalist tales and feminist exposé, Muslim reforms and apologetic tracts.²¹⁷

Any discussion of Islam in the West without focusing to some extent on women's issues is considered incomplete and apologetic. Therefore, our discussion in this chapter concentrates on the status of women in Islam and the roles they play today in the Muslim community.

As we've seen before, Islam places great emphasis on the structure of the family, which is believed to be the backbone of the Muslim community. Women constitute more than one half of Muslim society. Hence, the *Qur'an* addresses family issues more than any other issue except the concept of the unity of God, *tauhid*. Before the advent of Islam in Arabia, the Arabs had their own family structure and the place of women in Arabia was well-known. Generally, women were seen as second-class citizens, whose status and rights were diminished; they were only recognized after men had taken all their rights and due share in the property. That period in the history of Islam was known as the period of ignorance, *Jahiliyyah*, due to the lack of control and respect for a civil order in Arabia. The powerful ruled the weak; men controlled women; masters took and sold slaves and dealt with them in any cruel way they wanted. There was no civil authority to exercise any control. Nobody cared about the rights of women. Even women themselves thought that their situation in society was part of a natural order. They felt proud to be attached to their men.

Lamia al-Faruqi, in her work *Women, Muslim Society, and Islam*, points out that the study of women in Islam would be incomplete without evaluating the rights of women in Arabian culture, where Islam first grew. Thus, she identifies four periods which must be studied properly in order to understand the status of women in Islam. These periods include:

- a) women in 7th century Arabia;
- b) women in early Islam - from the emergence of Islam until the end of the reign of the fourth Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib in 661 C. E. and during the reign of the Umayyad and Abbasid empires 75—1250 C. E.;
- c) women during the centuries of decline of Islam and Muslims from 1250 – 1900 C. E.;
- d) women from the end of the 19th century until the 1980s.

In each period, al-Faruqi looks into the customs and rules pertaining to women in marriage, divorce, civil-political affairs, social affairs, and religio-cultic affairs.²¹⁸ While her historical analysis and categorizations

217 Esposito and Haddad, *Islam And Gender in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. X1.

218 L. al-Faruqi, *Women, Muslims, and Islam* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1988), p. 2.

seem to be general, they do give a clear picture of the status of women among Muslims through the ages and allow researchers to identify patterns of social structure in the Muslim community.

In seventh century Arabia, before Islam was introduced, marriage was of different types; this depended mostly on the tribe to which a woman belonged. There were two common types of marriage: marriage that determined kinship based on female descendents (matriarchy) and marriage that determined kinship based on male descendents (patriarchy). Neither marriage was preferred to the other. Both were equally practiced. In a matriarchal marriage, the woman remained in her tribe and enjoyed her kin's protection and dominance. Thus, she exercised a lot of power in her relationship. Her children belonged to her and she had the freedom to do whatever she wanted with her body and with her children. This type of relationship was known as *benna*. Also associated with this was a *mut'a* (temporary) marriage whereby the husband married a woman for a fixed period of time and paid her for it. The husband visited her at intervals and at her wish. Conclusion of the *benna* and *mut'a* marriages did not depend upon the consent of her family. She had the right to enter into marriage with anyone she wanted freely. However, if she had any children from this marriage, the child belonged to her family and tribe. The Arabian community recognized this type of marriage and endorsed it. Women also had the right to marry as many husbands as they wanted (polyandry). If she got pregnant, she gave the child to whomever she preferred among the men. Either way the child had to stay with her mother. Thus, she had control over herself and her body.²¹⁹

The second type of marriage was based on a patriarchal system whereby the woman belonged to her male descendents. In this type of relationship, marriage was conducted on her behalf and the marriage gift (*mahr*) was given to her parents or her guardian. The gift was seen as a compensation for her being taken away from her parents and surrendering their control over her to her husband. She was a piece of property in her new house, for she would be fully possessed by her husband and she had little say in her marriage. Her male family members made decisions for her after the marriage. Often times, she

219 See Ghuda Karmi "Women, Islam and Patriarchalism" in *Feminist and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, ed., by Mai Yamani, (New York: New York University Press, 1996); p. 77

was abused. The husband had the right to marry as many wives as he wanted, whereas she did not enjoy the same right to have many husbands. It should be pointed out that polygamous marriage was a common practice among different nations in the seventh century, particularly among the Persians, Syrians, and Byzantine people. Not all these people were Muslims.

When it comes to divorce, people whose marriages were based on the matriarchal system enjoyed unlimited freedom in terms of selecting their husbands and divorcing them. Women had the right to divorce their husbands, control their bodies, and have custody of their children, even though there was no financial support for the upbringing of their children, which caused instability for the women themselves. On the other hand, when the marriages were based on the patriarchal system, women seemed to suffer more. They had no right to divorce, or right to limit the number of wives their husbands could marry. And since the husbands had great control over them, they could be divorced at anytime. Wives would lose custody of their children and were not entitled to any compensation after the divorce. If she became widowed, the family of her husband could even inherit her. And she could be prevented from re-marrying.²²⁰

As to the religious role of women in seventh century Arabia, little is known. There was no common status for women religiously, for the Arabs then were mainly polytheistic. There were few of them who claimed to be Jews or Christians or even *Hanifi* (people of pious monotheists). However, we read that Arab men and women worshipped together; they ran around the *Ka'aba* together and attended to their deities just like men. Some goddesses were religiously recognized in the community and their help was sought during times of crisis, like in the case of the three goddesses of Mecca — *al-Uzzah*, *al-Lat*, and *al-Manat*. We do not come across any discrimination against women as far as religion is concerned. Women were even allowed to make *tawaf* (running around the *Ka'aba*) naked and the men would not interrupt or molest them. Men and women were perceived as equal before their deities.

Although women enjoyed, to a limited extent, a relatively independent role in pre-Islamic society, their social positions were

220 Al-Faruqi, p. 4.

deplorable, just like those of other women of their time. Al-Faruqi points out that despite the place that women occupy in pre-Islamic poetry and lavish descriptions of their beauty and virtues by outstanding poets like Umr al-Qays, they were generally perceived as inferior to men; they were subject to men's protection at all times.

There are numerous early poems involving the capture of women or showing the dependency of women on men and their defenseless submission either to their fathers, their relatives, their husbands, or their captors. Even the insult to a woman, as in the 'Amr ibn Kulthum's story is described as an insult not to the woman personally, but to her status in relation to the males of her family - as daughter of her father, niece of her uncle, wife of her husband, and mother of her son.²²¹

Having a female child was seen as a disgrace to the family. The pre-Islamic Arabs thought that women could not handle weapons, could not defend the family during war, and could not withstand vigorous hardship for fear of poverty. Such an attitude led some of them to bury their newborn daughters alive. These men who buried their daughters completely lost sight of the fact that they were born and raised by women. What irony! There were a few Arab women who stood out in the pre-Islamic era such as Khadijah, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad and Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, one of the Quraysh leaders before Islam. The examples of these few women suggest that some of them were prominent, very rich and influential in their societies. Some women even engaged and participated in war beside their men. Of course, little was written about them because they had no place in public.

When Islam came in 610 C. E., Muhammad introduced a new system, a new religion, with a completely different worldview. That which Islam found to be good in Arab society was retained (or modified where necessary); anything found to be deplorable or detrimental to the community of Muslims was condemned and deliberately dismantled. Islam considers the family structure as the backbone of Islamic society. It emphasizes the importance of the family and the need for

unity among its members. Reforms were made on how marriage was conducted. Women were perceived as equal partners in the marriage-contract. Although Islam retained the paternal system, it gave women the right to choose whom they wanted to marry. Women became equal partners in the marriage contract. Their consent was crucial and its absence would render the marriage null. Gradually, under Islam, they began to regain their rights as valuable human beings, as equals to men in making decisions on who should be their life partners. They became recognized as citizens who should not be discarded for fear of poverty or shame by their parents.

In addition, Islam sets a limit to the number of women that a man can marry at a time; it emphasizes the importance of fair treatment to all wives and condemns all the injustices that were previously inflicted upon women. Thus, wives have the right to stipulate any condition they want in their marriage contracts. Whatever is agreed upon in the contract is absolutely binding. And if the husband violates these terms, the wife has the freedom to divorce him. Prophet Muhammad introduced new reforms in Medina when Muslims became the majority. After the death of Muhammad, the status of women as equal to men and as partners remained in place for some time.

Regarding divorce in early Islam, the *Qur'an* calls for equal rights for women and men in divorce. Since Islamic marriage is contractual, both men and women enter into it freely and can get out of it freely. Of course, Islam recommends that amiable solutions be sought first before resort to divorce. But, if peaceful living between wife and husband cannot be sustained, divorce is allowed. That freedom and permission was lacking in the pre-Islamic era. Certainly, Islam established rules and regulations which govern the process of marriage and divorce. Muslim jurists later expanded and interpreted these rules.

Socially, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the community recognized women as partners and equal to men. They had the right to live, possess property, trade, earn and distribute their properties as they wanted. They were also entitled to inherit from their parents, husbands, relatives, and offspring, because they were the most essential part of the family. In no instance could they be excluded from inheritance. In addition, they had a right to receive an education and become educators in all fields of knowledge. They attend mosques, listen to lectures with

221 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

men, and participate in social gatherings as long as they maintain their modesty. Islam prescribes model dressing and model behavior for both men and women and each has to respect and help the other fulfill his/her duties towards God and towards the community. As Islam spread, women were no more perceived as burdens or liabilities as they had been perceived in the pre-Islamic era. Female children are valued, respected and receive great care from their parents; they are mothers and sisters of believers. All these reforms were made during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. His followers expanded these reforms after his death and succeeding generations modified them as needed.

Further, women and men are equal before God in Islam. It has been said that, "There is no text, old or new, that deals with the humanity of the women from all aspects with such amazing brevity, eloquence, depth and originality as the divine decree in the *Qur'an*."²²²

O human being, keep your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate (of the same kind) and spread from these two many men and women. (*Qur'an* 4:1)

If any do deeds of righteousness, be they males or females and have faiths, they will enter heaven and not the least injustice will be done to them. (*Qur'an* 4:124)

In these verses, the *Qur'an* emphasizes the equality of women and men before God and negates all inequalities due to sex, race, color, or tribe, because all human beings are created from the same soul. Muslims claim that the *Qur'an* does not blame women for original sin, as is believed by some Christians. Rather, Islam blames both Adam and Eve for disobeying God and eventually, when they repented, He forgave them (*Qur'an* 2:36, 7:20-25; 20:121). Further, in moral and spiritual development, no distinction is made between women and men. They stand on the same level before God as they will both receive their reward from God - no one will be deprived of his or her good deeds.

222 Raya' El-Nimr, "Women in Islamic Law" in *Feminism and Islam* p. 91 quoting Jamal Badawi, in *Status of Women in Islam*, p. 11.

Whosoever performs good deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer, we shall surely make them live a good life, and we will certainly reward them for the best of what they did. (*Qur'an* 16:97)

The *Qur'an* addresses women as believing women and accords them great respect, for they receive equal attention, reward and forgiveness from God just like men.

For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny) themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise, for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward. (*Qur'an* 33:35)

Divorce

On the issue of divorce, the *Qur'an* calls for equal rights for men and women. Since both can initiate the marriage contract, both can also initiate divorce. In Islam the dissolution of marriage can occur by one of these: death of the spouse, act of one or both of the parties (wife or husband) and by judicial process. Before divorce, couples are seriously encouraged to resolve their marital problems in amicable ways and seek the advice of their relatives. If they do decide to divorce one another, women are entitled to maintenance from the husband during the *iddah* (waiting period). The waiting period aims at ascertaining whether the wife is pregnant or not and giving ample opportunity for both parties to consider reconciliation. Marriage is one of the most virtuous institutions in Islam. Anything that strengthens it is encouraged. Islam discourages divorce; it does not prohibit it, yet maintains it should be the last resort.

And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves, so that you may find peace of mind in them and He ordained between you love and compassion. (*Qur'an* 30:21)

Politically, in early Islam, women were not left out. They were real participants in accepting Islam, spreading it, supporting it financially and defending it physically. Muslim women were among the delegates who migrated to Abyssinia and sought refuge with its king, Negus. Women were among those who pledged an oath of allegiance to Muhammad at *Aqabat* at Mecca in 619 C. E. They were also among the immigrants to Medina in 622 C. E. Some of them emigrated with their husbands and some traveled alone, like Um Ayman, Barakat, the wet-mother of the Prophet Muhammad. In addition, they contributed tremendously to teaching Islam to Muslims and in serving men during battle. Some even fought beside the Prophet and their husbands. They were not excluded politically as has been portrayed in history. Rather, wherever women were and during whatever period in early Islam, they participated in the day-to-day life of the Muslim community. They were part and parcel of the established community in Medina. They spoke out and asked Muhammad whatever they wanted. After Muhammad's death, women engaged in politics, discussed with Muslim leaders, had heated arguments with Umar (publicly at times), and went to war against Ali bin Abi Talib. They were real participants in the political affairs of their community. They did not see themselves as second-class citizens or inferior to men. Of course, they recognized that they were different in some aspects. But socially, politically, religiously, and economically, they perceived themselves as equal to men and were entitled to the same rights.

From the above analysis, we can conclude that women in the early days of Islam, until the period of decline, enjoyed unlimited freedom and rights as did men. They moved from being unwanted children to admired children, from members who had no say in their marriages to people who could dictate the terms of their marriage contracts, initiate divorce and claim damages for mistreatment. In addition, they were entitled to inheritance, whereas before Islam, they themselves were considered property to be given away, discarded or buried alive if their masters and parents so wished. Without doubt, Muslim women in the

first few centuries won many rights in Islam, which their counterparts in other religions and civilizations did not enjoy until the last few centuries.

After the death of Muhammad, Muslim women continued to enjoy those rights. Occasionally, attempts were made by Muslim leaders to curtail their rights and involvement in public, but the women resisted such deprivation and asserted themselves as co-members of the community whose legal and religious rights had to be reckoned with. Thus, when an attempt was made to fix their marriage entitlement (*mahr*), they objected strongly and their voices were heard. When another attempt was made to prevent them from attending the mosque, they raised their voices loud and, eventually, they were left alone. Today, they attend mosques and participate in prayers as do men.

The Umayyad and Abbasid empires were not as committed to Islam as were the immediate disciples of Muhammad, yet their roles in spreading Islam and the advancement of Islamic civilization have been felt by all Muslims. Their achievements cannot be unappreciated.. It was during the Abbasid period, the golden age of Islamic culture, that Muslims proved themselves to be leaders of the world in terms of education, science and all fields of knowledge. Women's rights were not seriously curtailed as evidenced by their participation, socially and educationally. Some were scholars, lawyers, teachers, poets, and doctors. Some even became mystics like *Rabi'ah al-Adawiyyah*. Women relatively enjoyed their rights during the Umayyad and Abbasid Empires and during the reign of Muslims in Spain from 750-1492 C. E.

After the decline of these empires, women's situations in all areas and spheres of life changed drastically. The defeat of the Muslims in Baghdad by the s nearly brought an end to all the rights enjoyed by women. Muslims being weak politically became conservative. They tried to retain whatever they could so as not to lose their religious identity. Thus, marriages became arranged, whereby the parents concluded a marriage contract on behalf of their daughters and sons. Often times, the daughters accepted their parents' choice wrongly believing that it was their duty to do so. Of course, there were a few cases where they rejected what had been arranged for them. During that period, minor (underage) marriages were common, endorsed and practiced. Parents would give their daughters into marriage to whomever they wanted

without seeking the permission of their daughters. Upon reaching the age of puberty, the marriage would be consummated. Occasionally, either party might reject it. Such rejection often brought shame to the family. It was viewed as an inability of the parents to control their daughters.

In those situations, Muslim women were ignorant of their rights and merely adhered to their parents' choices, which were shaped not by Islamic laws and concepts but by local customs and culture in their area. Eventually, women lost the legitimate rights they had gained. They were unaware that their consent was necessary and that marriage itself was a contract that gave them unlimited freedom and privileges. Therefore, uncontrolled polygamy and concubineage flourished among the rich, while poor Muslims were unable to marry due to the exorbitant amount set as dowry (*mahr*) for marriage, despite *Qur'anic* legislation against such fixing and high payment.

The disregard for Islamic law was not limited to marriage issues; it included disregard for the Islamic method of divorce as well. Women during these centuries of decline were divorced arbitrarily without any consideration for their feelings or for their consequences. Men alone enjoyed their right to initiate divorce, which they often abused and women were taught they had no right to divorce or complain about their husbands. They became slaves and prisoners in their own homes. They received no adequate Islamic education and as time went on, they were relegated to the status of second-class citizens who had no say in the affairs of their lives. Their level of education decreased drastically and there were few scholars among women. Adversely, the roles they played in society and in the family as educators of their children eroded. The new generation became weaker and weaker until the Europeans conquered the Muslim empires from East to West in the 18th and 19th centuries. By that time, women had lost all the rights granted to them by Islam and became prey to many abuses. Their roles were confined to household servants; "they had no function in life beyond the immediate family circle or inside the house."²²³

Socially and religiously, they were cut-off from the spiritual and intellectual development of their souls and minds. Hence, they remained ignorant, knowing little about their religion and their relationship with

God and with other human beings. And instead of attaching themselves to the teachings of Islam, they cherished their customs and cultures and preferred them to Islam. Wearing a veil (*pardah*) to cover all the body, including the face and hands, was imposed on women under the pretext of safeguarding their modesty and providing security and protection for them.

Al-Faruqi mentions several causes for the erosion of women's rights during the decline centuries, among which were:

- a) The s invaded Baghdad, the most important Islamic culture and intellectual center for all Muslims at that time. The collapse of Baghdad and its destruction left the Muslims intellectually bankrupt. As a result, they became more conservative in their attitudes towards Islam and real life.
- b) Within that period, feudal leaders took over the management of most of the Muslim countries and fought one another for material gains. And since women were not engaging in those wars, their contribution to society became less. Little regard was accorded to them, if any. They became protected citizens whose survival depended upon their male counterparts. Also, they became tools in the hands of their protectors, be it their parents, husbands, uncles, brothers, or of even their sons.
- c) Disintegration of the members of society due to the change, which accompanied living in different environments, particularly in foreign lands. The protection which people received when they lived within their own people or tribes or relatives was lost due to constant relocation by not settling in one place. Living in foreign lands often prevented people from preserving their culture or customs, particularly after the first and second generations of descendants.
- d) And since education had been weakened, Muslims returned to their old traditions and customs to find solutions to their daily problems. Thus, the old, pre-Islamic customs and attitudes re-emerged and within a short time, they became dominant customs. Eventually, due to lack of Islamic education, people accepted them as Islamic customs. All these had bad effects

223 Al-Faruqi, p. 12.

on Islam and Muslims. Changing things became very difficult because people were used to them.²²⁴

Towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Muslim countries witnessed new developments. European countries began to conquer Muslim countries one by one. With this conquest, some Muslim reformers emerged and cried out for return to pristine Islam so that Muslims could reclaim their lost glory. Those reformers insisted that Muslims should go back to their laws and Islamic legacy to re-discover the principles of governance in the *Qur'an* and in the Prophetic traditions. And as far as women's issues were concerned, these reformers made drastic changes. Marriage laws were reformed to give more freedom to women to choose their partners. They discouraged pre-arranged marriages and banned it in some countries. In addition, polygamous marriage, which only the affluent practiced, was brought under control by establishing laws to minimize its practice. Thus, women began to regain their right to marry whomever they wanted and to stipulate whatever they wished in their marriage contracts. Great progress was achieved in these areas.

Although Muslim women lost their right to divorce in the past, those rights were reinstated at the beginning of the 20th century. Many Muslim countries like Egypt, Algeria, and Pakistan enacted laws that allowed women to initiate divorce on several grounds and claim maintenance for themselves and their children after divorce. Men lost their right to arbitrarily divorce. Also, an Islamic court must approve the divorce. Occasionally wives must give their consent before a divorce can be legally accepted. Of course, men do not adhere strictly to these laws. Local customs remain in practice in many places. As Muslim interaction with the West increases, women's involvement in the social and political affairs of the community increases too. Since the independence of many Muslim countries from the 1950s on, some Muslim countries like Pakistan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey have granted the right to vote to women. And after the revolution of 1979 in Iran, women in Iran and Sudan were granted the right to vote as well.

Eventually, some were elected to ministerial positions as in Pakistan, Turkey, and Bangladesh. In the above three countries, women have

served as prime ministers. There are a number of women today in the House of Representatives (*majilis al-Shura*) in Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, and Malaysia. In the past three decades, women have contributed and continue to play essential roles in the governance of their countries by rendering tremendous social and humanitarian services to the Muslim community. Many women's organizations and movements were formed and each one of these organizations, in one form or another, promotes the women's agenda: the improvement and empowerment of women in all spheres of life. Their impact has begun to yield results. There are many young girls enrolled in primary and secondary education, and their enrollment in higher education at universities has also increased compared to that of a few decades ago.

Regarding religion, the achievement of women in the 19th and 20th centuries has been less, although a considerable number of them have begun to study Islam and its laws at higher levels. Thus, women scholars began to emerge and some of them have been fortunate enough to be appointed to higher posts as judges or assistant judges in Islamic courts, and other male dominated posts in Iran, Sudan, Nigeria, Egypt and a few other places.

The Roles of Women in Islam

After delineating the place of women in Islamic history, how they were perceived before Islam and how they were held after, we would like to illustrate briefly what the roles of women are as depicted in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The *Qur'an* sets out from the beginning that God created men and women from a single soul. From this soul, He created its mate, and then from both, He created other human beings.

Oh mankind, reverence Your Guardian Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; reverence God, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for God ever watches over you. (*Qur'an* 4:1)

224 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Throughout the story of creation in the *Qur'an*, no mention is made of the creation of woman from the rib of man. This points to the fact that both male and female are creatures of God and neither is better or less valued than the other by God. Muslims believe that there must be some purpose for creating man and woman differently, even though one of the major purposes of creation is to worship God and follow the path He designed for human beings. But after their creation, people disobeyed God and He held them accountable. When they repented, God forgave them, accepted them, and showered His mercy upon them. The *Qur'an* does not blame woman for the mistake of disobedience or eating from the forbidden tree (*Qur'an* 2:36; 7:20-24). The *Qur'an* emphasizes that man and woman are created for one another.

And of His signs is this: He created for you helpmates from yourselves that ye may find rest of mind in them and He ordained between you love and Mercy. (*Qur'an* 30:21)

Both are expected to live together peacefully. Each has duties to render and rights to claim. The principle responsibilities of each are explained in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*.

Regarding the religious aspect, both men and women are servants of God. God sent revelations to both of them and required them to learn it, understand it, and apply it to their daily lives, for each earns only the reward of that which he/she works for. "Every soul will be held in pledge for its deeds" (*Qur'an* 74:38). And God has promised not to deny anyone his/her deeds, however small they are.

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will we give a new life, a life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions. (*Qur'an* 16:97).

Religiously, a woman is not different from a man. She performs every religious duty that a man does. When necessary, she is excused from performing certain duties like fasting during menstruation due to the physical hardship. Whatever she misses, she makes up. And if she

were to perform all her religious duties, she must be allowed to learn about them herself. We can deduce from this that men and women are equal in the pursuit of knowledge, which enables them to perform their duties adequately and contribute to the development of their society as well.

Socially, Islam regards women in society as equal participants. Society primarily sees her as a child with many duties to be rendered to her as an adolescent, as a wife, and if she chooses to be, as a mother, and as a community builder. As a child, she must be welcomed and loved by her parents, for they (parents) had no choice in having a male or female child. Whatever is given to them by God, they should accept and be thankful for it. There are people all over the world who prefer the male child to the female, particularly among the Arabs. Islam asserts that it is God who bestows a female or male child to whomever He wants (*Qur'an* 42:49-50). And when a Muslim has been bestowed with a female child, he must love her, educate her, and provide her with whatever she needs. She must be treated fairly in all aspects as he would treat his male child. Also, one should not prefer his/her female child to his/her male child. Both deserve kind and equal treatment. When a female child grows up, she deserves to be properly educated for Islam has made seeking knowledge a duty upon both Muslim men and women. Islam insists that parents must provide learning opportunities for their children. As shown above, when Islam was introduced, the Prophet Muhammad educated women too. Many of them became scholars, and their contributions in establishing Islam, in teaching it, imparting it to their children, and passing it to the next generations cannot be underestimated, as has been documented in Islamic history.

When a female child reaches the age of maturity, she has the choice to marry or not to marry. Certainly marriage is strongly recommended. Muslim society looks at unmarried women with contempt even though there are a lot of women who do not marry for one reason or another. Marriage in Islam is the bedrock of Muslim society. The *Qur'an* explains that marriage is a natural union between two people and that its objectives are to guarantee the emotional well-being of the individual and spiritual harmony. Marriage is seen as a source of peace and comfort for both parties:

And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect. (*Qur'an* 30:21)

Muslims believe that harmony and comfort can only be attained in marriage when both man and woman are united in a bond of mutual interest, which is planned and based on a solid religious foundation. Marriage is part of fulfilling one's religious duties and therefore Islam stipulates that man and woman go into it with full consent. This consent is an essential element of Islamic marriage. God says: "Do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree between themselves in a lawful manner" (*Qur'an* 2:232). Also, one finds in Islamic history, even during the time of the Prophet, numerous examples where women objected to being forced into marriage. An example of this is the case of a girl who complained to the Prophet. Her father forced her to marry without her consent, as reported by Ibn Abbas. After listening to her case, Prophet Muhammad gave her the choice between accepting the marriage and rejecting it. She finally accepted the marriage but pointed out that she wanted other women to know that their parents cannot force them into marriage without their consent.²²⁵

There are many arranged marriages taking place in Muslim countries today. Still, such practices are not recommended in Islam. Members of the family can help a young lady find a suitor or make a decision. However, Islam teaches that no woman should be forced to marry a man she does not want in her life, as happens at times. On the other hand, parents may not want their daughter to marry a particular person when the daughter is interested in him. The guideline in Islam is that if the suitor is a practical Muslim, he should not be rejected because of his appearance or lack of wealth or status. Religious practice determines the suitability of the wife and of the husband. It was reported in one of the *Hadith* as narrated by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal that the Prophet Muhammad once asked one of his companions to give his daughter in marriage to another companion known as *Julaybeeb*. According to the story, *Julaybeeb* was a short and fat man. He used to run errands

225 *Hadith* Ibn Maja #2469 and #1873.

among women in Medina. The companion whom the Prophet spoke to said that he would seek the advice of his wife before he answered the Prophet. He went home and told his wife. She rejected the offer and swore that her daughter would never marry *Julaybeeb*, whom she thought had no status. When the husband wanted to go out and inform the Prophet about their rejection of his request, the daughter heard her parents' conversation and interrupted. She was told the story and she said that she would never reject an offer made by the Prophet Muhammad. "If the Prophet had chosen *Julaybeeb* for me," she said, "I would marry him for he (the Prophet) would never mislead me." She told her parents to honor Prophet Muhammad's request and they did. The marriage was very successful and God blessed her due to the prayer of the Prophet for her. She was considered one of the richest women in Medina after her marriage with *Julaybeeb*.²²⁶ This story shows that a female has a right to accept or not accept an offer of marriage. She has choice and freedom of consent, for she is the one who is going to live with the man for the rest of her life. Therefore, she must agree to the marriage contract before it becomes binding.

Furthermore, the abuses in marriage should not be blamed on Islam as a religion but on those Muslims who fail to adhere to the guidance and teaching of their religion. Many practices in the Muslim world regarding marriage are based on local customs, which are derived from native cultures or traditions and which are difficult to change. Nevertheless, many Muslim women object to arranged-marriages, and oftentimes they win, particularly when they are educated, know their religious rights and take their cases to Islamic Courts. A case in point is the case of Karimatu Yakubu at the *Shari'ah* court in Nigeria. I cited this case when discussing family law in Islam in Chapter Six.

Mutual Rights After Marriage

After getting married, the husband and wife have equal rights and obligations towards one another. The major rights are clearly stated in Islam. Both have the right to enjoy each other sexually; both earn whatever they work for; and both are duly responsible for fulfilling their religious duties. Islam assigns leadership of the family to the man due to his greater financial responsibilities and offer of protection.

226 Ahmad bin Hambal, *Masnad Imam Ahmad bin Hambal*.

In Islam, the husband is financially responsible for providing for the family, "But men have a degree (of advantage) over them, and God is exalted in Power and Wise." (*Qur'an* 2:228). A wife can help when she wants but is not obliged to do so. As we all know, a healthy family is one in which both the wife and husband work together and do things based on mutual agreement and respect. That man becomes the head of the family does not imply that he becomes a dictator or oppressor. If he does, he will not find peace and tranquility in his family and house.

The leadership of the man in the family is called *qiwamah*, which has been interpreted in different ways. Some scholars say that it is the qualities of maintenance that are bestowed on man. Some say it is the tolerance with which man treats his wife; and some say it refers to man's natural gift of forejudging matters pertaining to his family and managing the problems affecting it.²²⁷ Thus, both men and women should be complementary to each other in a multi-functional organization. God assigns to each person what is conducive to his or her nature by taking into consideration the physiological and psychological make-up of each one.

The roles and functions assigned to each group are in accord with the welfare of the large group, society, and its members. Islam does not hold the goals and rights of any particular group or individual to be supreme, rather it instills in its followers a sense of his or her place within the family and of a responsibility to the group.²²⁸

Therefore, each sex has, in general, some advantages over the other. That women take care of rearing children as mothers and wives should not be considered secondary. In reality, it is a sacred and noble role, for women are the ones who actually shape the future of society through the nurturing they offer, the education they give, and culture they pass to their children, the new generation, and leaders of tomorrow.

When women abandon their roles as mothers and surrender the upbringing of their children to babysitters and nannies, the result is

chaos, as experience has shown in many countries. Kids grow up without being taught any moral values. Motherhood is natural in women and they do it better than any other member of society. In many Muslim countries, wives take care of the house: they cook, clean, nurse, and do many other hard jobs. Certainly, they are not required by Islamic law to do all these duties. They are free not to do them, although it has become an accepted and expected norm that they do them voluntarily. When they offer these services, they should be respected and compensated. The services they provide can never be measured with money.

On Divorce

Further, as women have the right to enter into marriage freely, they also have the right to terminate their marriage on mutual agreement because it is a contract in which each party has to fulfill certain duties. Failure to perform these duties may lead to divorce, such as failure to provide for the family, maltreatment or abuse of the wife, or doing something that violates the contract, etc. After all, a wife is a responsible legal person capable of suing her husband or being sued. She can sue her husband for any infringement of her legitimate rights as expressed in Islamic law books.²²⁹ Although the *Qur'an* strongly encourages believers to reconcile issues of marital dispute and send arbiters to mediate between the conflicting parties, if no amicable solution is reached and both wife and husband can no longer live together peacefully, Islam allows them to separate with humbleness without causing any harm to either party. God says:

When you divorce women and they reach their prescribed term, then retain them in kindness and retain them not for injury so that you transgress (the limits)." (*Qur'an* 2:231)

O believers, it is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against their will and do not treat them with harshness in order to take from them as part of what you have given them unless they are guilty of open lewdness." (*Qur'an* 4:19)

227 Raga' El-Nimr, "Women in Islamic Law" in *Feminism and Islam*, p. 94.

228 Al-Faruqi, p. 25.

229 *Feminism and Islam*, p. 98

As men can divorce women for several causes, women also can seek legal divorce on several grounds. It is reported that the wife of Thabit bin Qais (a companion) came to the Prophet Muhammad and expressed her desire to separate from her husband. She told the Prophet "O messenger of God, as for Ibn Qais, I do not blame him for his character and piety, but I dislike infidelity in Islam." The Prophet understood that she did not want to commit adultery when she was already married. She did not like her husband anymore. The Prophet asked her whether she was ready to return the dowry she received from him. She said yes. The Prophet asked Qais to let her go and take back the dowry he gave to her. He divorced her and she was set free.²³⁰ Another case was Burayrah. She complained to Prophet Muhammad that she did not want to stay with her husband anymore. The Prophet called and appealed to her to go back to him. She asked the Prophet whether he was ordering her or interceding for her husband. When the Prophet assured her that he was interceding, she responded that she had no more interest in her husband. The Prophet allowed her to divorce her husband. In another case in Nigeria, there was a wife who reported her husband of physical abuse. In the lower court, she was asked to go back to her husband who was beating her. She refused to obey the court's order and appealed to a higher court and was ultimately granted a divorce. As for the dowry he had paid for her, the court ordered she could keep it because she was not the cause of the dissolution. The husband was abusing her physically, thus he deserved no reimbursement for his cruelty.²³¹

Troublesome Issues: Veiling, Testimony and Leadership

There are a few issues concerning women that deserve our special attention. Among them are the issues of veiling (women covering their heads in public), the equality of women in inheritance, polygamy and women's leadership in public. As for veiling, Islam requires believers to adhere to the commands of God in all their affairs. Thus, the *Qur'an* prescribes modest dress. The woman is to beautify herself with the veil of honor, chastity, and integrity.

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and God is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye believers turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain bliss. (*Qur'an* 24:30-31).

Some argue that these verses refer to the wives of the Prophet, but in Islam, they were the role models that Muslim women were to emulate. Both Muslim men and women are required to dress modestly. Modesty springs from the heart through obedience to God and refraining from what God forbids. A Muslim woman is commanded in the *Qur'an* not to display or dispose her beauty to strangers in order to attract them. Strangers are people who are not related to her by blood. Women who put on *hijab* (Islamic head-cover) are convinced that they are fulfilling a religious duty and that wearing it demonstrates their Islamic identity, which separates them from non-Muslim women, who do not cover. Maha Azzam has pointed out that women in the Middle East wear *hijab* as an identity and symbol of Islam.

It is important not to overlook the fact that the *hijab* is worn by women out of sincere conviction and it is primarily meant to convey piety and respect for religious values rather than political radicalism and anti-Westernism, but the potential for it to symbolize a political stand is very powerful.²³²

230 *Feminism and Islam*, p. 99.

231 Sadiq, *Ibid.*

232 Maha Azzam "Gender and the Politics of Religion in the Middle East" in *Feminism and Islam*, p. 226.

As men can divorce women for several causes, women also can seek legal divorce on several grounds. It is reported that the wife of Thabit bin Qais (a companion) came to the Prophet Muhammad and expressed her desire to separate from her husband. She told the Prophet "O messenger of God, as for Ibn Qais, I do not blame him for his character and piety, but I dislike infidelity in Islam." The Prophet understood that she did not want to commit adultery when she was already married. She did not like her husband anymore. The Prophet asked her whether she was ready to return the dowry she received from him. She said yes. The Prophet asked Qais to let her go and take back the dowry he gave to her. He divorced her and she was set free.²³⁰ Another case was Burayrah. She complained to Prophet Muhammad that she did not want to stay with her husband anymore. The Prophet called and appealed to her to go back to him. She asked the Prophet whether he was ordering her or interceding for her husband. When the Prophet assured her that he was interceding, she responded that she had no more interest in her husband. The Prophet allowed her to divorce her husband. In another case in Nigeria, there was a wife who reported her husband of physical abuse. In the lower court, she was asked to go back to her husband who was beating her. She refused to obey the court's order and appealed to a higher court and was ultimately granted a divorce. As for the dowry he had paid for her, the court ordered she could keep it because she was not the cause of the dissolution. The husband was abusing her physically, thus he deserved no reimbursement for his cruelty.²³¹

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230 *Feminism and Islam*, p. 99.

231 Sadiq, *Ibid.*

232 Maha Azzam "Gender and the Politics of Religion in the Middle East" in *Feminism and Islam*, p. 226.

Wearing *hijab* should not be understood as a mere covering of the head but includes wearing a cloth that covers the body also, which is not tight or transparent. The *hijab* (veil) is what protects woman from being an object of attraction or becoming prey to seducers. Abdalati says:

The veil, which a Muslim woman puts on, is one that can save her soul from weakness, her mind from indulgence, her eyes from lustful looks, and her personality from demoralization. Islam is most concerned with the integrity of woman, with the safeguarding of her morals and morals with the protection of her character and personality.²³³

The majority of Muslim women do not consider wearing *hijab* a burden at all. They recognize that men do not impose it on them as some feminists claim. Of course, what constitutes *hijab* differs from one Muslim country to another. In some areas, particularly in Saudi Arabia and some Gulf areas, women cover themselves from head to toe. They do not show any part of their body - some even some cover their mouths and noses. In other Arab countries, women cover their bodies except their faces and hands, as stated in the *Qur'an*. In Islamic law, there are different interpretations of the meanings of *hijab*.

Inheritance

Islam from its inception guaranteed the right to inheritance to both males and females. Unfortunately, feminists see women as being deprived of an equal share in inheritance. A male heir receives double what a female heir receives. This does not in any sense imply that she is worth half of a man. If what is meant by equality is fifty percent of everything, then men receive more than women at times and women receive more than men at times. It depends on the situation and the relationship of the heirs to the deceased. In all cases of Islamic distribution of inheritance, Muslim scholars strongly argue that what is given to each is a just and fair distribution *par excellence*. What the woman is given corresponds to her financial responsibilities. As far as Islam is concerned, a woman is not financially responsible for

anyone. She owns what she earns and spends it in whatever way she desires.

In contrast, a man has many financial responsibilities to shoulder. Islamic law holds him responsible for himself, his wife, his parents, and immediate relatives. As such, Islam has given him double of what a female heir receives because of his huge financial responsibilities, which will never be reduced or waived, regardless of whether his wife is rich or poor. The one-half share given to her has nothing to do with her sex but with her responsibilities and obligations. Therefore, where both man and woman are assigned the same responsibilities, they receive equal shares. A vivid example is a father and mother who succeeded their sons or daughters. Both receive one sixth of what their deceased son or daughter left behind. Also, in a case where the deceased left behind a daughter and father, the daughter receives one half of all the property left behind, while the father receives only one sixth. Thus, the division has to do with the degree of responsibility rather than with the gender of the heirs.

In Islam, women are free from the usual economic responsibilities and they enjoy this. They are not required by Islamic law to provide for themselves or for anyone else. However, they are free to provide for themselves or for whomever they want if they choose to do so. They are always assured of adequate care by the law, because they are the builders of the nation and of the community as a whole. Muslims maintain that the place of women is in the home. Not that they cannot do anything else, but that any other duty is secondary, for building the leaders of tomorrow is not a small task but a huge responsibility. Women are freed from financial responsibilities so that they can devote their lives to their families, children, and to the community at large. On the other hand, a male is required by the law to provide for himself and for many others. Therefore, he deserves to receive more shares in inheritance.

When he sometimes receives a larger share of inheritance, it is probably in recognition of his manifold obligation and in partial compensation therefore. The whole scheme seems so designed as to ensure equity. When a larger share of the property is allocated to the exclusively liable male, who may be responsible for an entire household or perhaps beyond, and a smaller

233 Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, p. 191.

share is allocated to the care free and economically non-responsible female, the allocation cannot be easily called discriminatory against women. It will be discriminatory, indeed, if men and women were given the same or equal financial responsibilities.²³⁴

It is pertinent to mention that inheritance in itself is a gift and an aid. It is not a reward for one's labor or knowledge at all. It is a bonus given by God to the heirs and thus God himself regulates it in the *Qur'an*. Neither male nor female heirs work for an inheritance. This distribution is a just distribution as outlined in the *Qur'an*, although what each heir receives may not be identical, for none deserves what he or she receives. Inheritance is a pure gift.

Unto men (of the family) belongs a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and unto women as share of that which parents and near kindred leave, whether it be a little or much, a determinate share (given by God) (*Qur'an* 4:7).

However, it should not be forgotten that before the distribution of any property left by the deceased, there are certain other rights to it. All debts of the deceased should be paid from the property, and all his/her funeral expenses will be taken out too. If he/she has written a will, it must be executed as long as the will does not exclude legitimate heir(s) like sons or daughters. If the will includes any endowment, such endowment should not exceed one third of the property. If it exceeds one third, its execution is subject to the approval of the legitimate heirs. If they do not approve it, only one third will be given as endowment and the rest is returned to the heirs.

Polygamous Marriage²³⁵

Another issue that generates serious debate with regard to women's status in Islam is polygamous marriage. Polygamy (more correctly

called polygyny) refers to a plural marriage where two wives or more are married to one man at the same time. In Islam, it is a marriage whereby a man has permission to marry multiple wives, up to four at the same time. Islam allows polygamous marriage with certain conditions set down in Islamic law. Polygamy is neither an offense nor a command; it is not an article of faith, but a voluntary behavioral measure permitted by Islam. Islam does not command that every capable Muslim male must marry more than one wife; neither does it force women to accept polygamy. It is an optional remedy suggested by Islam to address some societal problems in the arena of sexual relationships among its members. Muslim scholars argue that the permission to marry more than one wife is stated in the *Qur'an*:

If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three of four. But if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them) then only one of (a captive) that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice. (*Qur'an* 4:3)

Muslims are not the only people or nations who practice polygamous marriage.²³⁶ It is practiced by non-Muslims of the East and West in various forms, as well. Some of which are legal and some of which are not, some in secret and some in public. It is also a common practice among African people, although the number of Christians who practice it is less than that of Muslims and followers of African traditional religions. However, since Islamic marriage is a contract, the wife has the right to stipulate in her contract not to accept a rival wife. If the husband agrees to that, it becomes binding on him. Thus, if after a while, he marries another wife, the former wife can seek divorce and the Islamic court would release her because the husband breached the contract.

Press, 1996).

236 The Jews practiced polygamy until 1000 C. E. before the Rabbis outlawed it. European Christian Churches endorsed it until the Catholic Emperor Justinian outlawed it in 600 C. E. In the Old Testament, the biblical patriarchy prophets married many wives without any limitation (Exodus 21:10; II Samuel 5:13). Abraham, David, Solomon and Rehoboam (Solomon's son) married many wives (I Chronicle 3: 1-9; I King 11:3; II Chronicle 11: 21).

234 Hammudah Abd al-Ati, *Family Structure in Islam* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1977) p. 269.

235 For more information on Polygamous Marriage see: Sterling M. McMurrin, *Polygamous Marriage in Contemporary Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Nonetheless, since Islam does not distinguish between Church and State, marriage is considered both a social and religious requirement. Islam attends to the needs of its members in all aspects of life. Women always outnumber men because of various things like war, earthquake, and the death of many men due to hard labor. When there are surplus women with few men to marry them (as occurred in the 1990s after the genocide war in Bosnia and Albania and present wars in Iraq and Afghanistan), Islam allows men to marry more than one wife if they are capable physically and financially of bearing the responsibility of more than one marriage. Muslims believe that both men and women long to be with one another emotionally, socially, and familiarly. They want to have their own homes and families. Societal affiliation remains very strong among Muslims while the sense of individual pride is foreign and less appreciated. In allowing polygamy, Islam aims at maintaining the dignity and security of individuals and protecting the integrity and morale of society.²³⁷ However, Islam does not require that every male Muslim should marry two, three or four wives. It is an option only.

Further, Muslim scholars mention other reasons why polygamy is allowed: to meet the sexual needs of some male individuals and to be a remedy in case of chronic illness or barrenness of the women. Men's sexual needs are said to be greater and more demanding than women's. Males are in general more inclined toward variety in sex than are females. Men occasionally do find many legal and illegal ways to satisfy these physical and emotional needs. When these means are not controlled, they lead the man towards deviant sexual behavior, which creates social and moral problems in society. Thus, in such a case, Islam allows men to marry another wife rather than to be sexually deviant. Sex is perceived as a means of enjoyment and an act of worship at times. It is not seen as a sin, as it is in some other traditions. Hence, there is no celibacy in Islam.

At times, married men appeal to some women and try their best to win them legally or otherwise. At times, too, some unmarried women appeal to a man and he tries his best to win her legally or otherwise. Such a man would try to have a relationship with her in secret or in public. This might have a serious effect on a man if he is married, and also on a woman if she is married, and may ruin the morale and social

fabric that ties members of the society together. Eventually, married women would be neglected, children forsaken, and the family home broken. Had men been allowed to take a second wife legally, these problems might have been minimized or avoided.²³⁸ Muslims think that the permission to marry a second wife is to have a sexual relationship legally in a responsible way with equal fulfillment of all obligations to the first and second wives without leading the man to sexual deviation. Abdalati also mentions that this occasionally happens when the marital life of certain couples is not cordial and yet neither opts for divorce for one reason or the other.

Further, one of the main purposes of marriage in Islam is procreation. If the wife is barren, the husband should be given a chance to take a second wife so that he may fulfill his dream of having a child, preserving his name and strengthen the family bond. In such a situation, the barren wife may opt to stay or to divorce and marry another man through whom she may have a child too. Marriage without procreation is culturally disapproved of. Islam does not approve of adoption,²³⁹ thus the barren wife either stays with her husband and accepts the reality of her life or seeks divorce. The same rule would apply to a woman who has children and falls chronically ill. She becomes incapable of working and taking care of the children. If the husband cannot afford to employ a maid, in Islam, he is permitted to marry another wife, particularly if the first wife gives her consent. Giving such permission is not uncommon among Muslims for it helps all members of the family: the first wife, the children, and the second wife too. Western law would rather overlook the immorality of the husband by keeping silent in such a case than endorse legal marriage to bring happiness and harmony to the afflicted home.

There are many other occasions in which some Muslim men find it impossible to resist the temptation of having a relationship with other women, particularly when they travel away from home for long periods, either for business or study. They are expected to refrain and remain faithful to their families. But experience has shown that many men (and women at times) do commit illegal practices and indulge in

238 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

239 Nowadays, there are some scholars who approve adoption in a different way. The child retains the name of his biological parents and they can claim him at any time.

237 Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, p.168.

immoral activities in our so-called "free" society. When these women produce illegitimate children, the upbringing of those children rests on the shoulders of innocent members of society. If the community fails to raise them properly, they become a burden and create problems for everyone. They are a liability to society at large.

Again, it is pertinent to mention here that Muslims are not the only people that practice polygamy. Polygamous marriage was known and practiced among Jews (Judge 10:45; 12:14) as well. King Solomon had hundreds of wives (1 king 9:16; 11:13). His son had 18 wives and 60 concubines (2 Chronicles 11:21). It is also reported that each of Rehoboam's 28 sons had many wives (2 Chronicles 11:23). Clearly there was no check upon polygamous marriage. While some rabbis condemned it, others allowed it only in cases of a childless wife.²⁴⁰

Polygamous marriage among Christians is uncommon. Christianity regards monogamy as the normal form of marriage and its members consider it the best form of marriage. However, polygamy is not expressly prohibited in the Bible except in the case of bishops and deacons.²⁴¹ There are a few examples in Christian history where polygamous marriage was accommodated and even preached at times, as happened in 1531 when the Anabaptists preached that a true Christian must have several wives.²⁴² Abdullati argues that several Christian kings married more than one wife and kept many concubines. He then concludes that monogamy is not a function of respect for women at all. He says:

The monogamous orientation of Christianity was probably the product of religious philosophy 'which regarded every gratification of the sexual impulse with suspicion and incontinence as the greatest sin. In its early days, the church showed little respect for women, but its horror of sensuality was immense.' And because

²⁴⁰ Abdullati P. 113.

²⁴¹ It was said that Jesus never said a word against polygamy. "There are other Christian leaders and theologians like Luther, Melancthon, Buer, who would not hesitate to deduce the legality of polygamy from the parable of the virgins in Matthew 25:1-2, for Jesus envisions there the possibility of the marriage of one man with as many as ten girls simultaneously. (Muhammad Hamidullah, *the Muslim Woman*, p. 165).

²⁴² Abd al-Ati, *Family Structure*, p. 306. Edward A. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (1922), vol. 1:434; 3:235-236; 3:249-250.

the chief concern of the Church was to save souls by preventing the deadly sin of fornication, the form of marriage was reduced to the simplest possible term. [Monogamy] was not a pre-conceived social philosophy, but most probably a contribution of aversion of sex, suspicion of women, and preoccupation with soul saving that gave Christianity its doctrinal monogamous character.²⁴³

Finally, Muslim's stand on polygamy is that it is permissible under certain circumstances; monogamous marriage is the rule and preferable. Otherwise, polygamy may be considered if necessary. It is an exception. This exception has many advantages, social as well as moral, and Islamic law addresses this human need. Those Muslims who resort to polygamy are affluent and less in number than those who opt for monogamous marriage.

Leadership

On leadership, men and women can lead in any capacity in Islam even though in many Muslim communities women are relegated to secondary roles. Muslim women can be head of state (as it happened in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Turkey), CEO of a company and a leader of Islamic centers as in the U.S. The only restriction on women is not to lead men in daily or Friday prayers, thereby avoiding provoking sexual inclinations. However, women can lead women in prayer in public and men lead women in prayer in public. The leadership of women in daily prayers in the mosque is looked at from a moral perspective and not from a legal perspective at all. Muslim women are not leaders in many Muslim countries, not because Islam prevents them from holding office, but because these societies are patriarchal where little freedom is given to women regardless of whether they are Muslim or not. For example, there has never been a woman president in the US and in many European countries despite their claims of equal freedom for women. There has never been a female pope and even in the Baha'i religion, which claimed from its inception that men and women are equal, until present, has had no woman elected as a member in the

²⁴³ Abd al-Ati, *Family Structure*, p. 115.

Universal House of Justice, the highest administrative structure in the Bahai religion. There are several attempts nowadays by Muslim women to lead Muslim daily prayers in public and on Fridays as it happened in New York. Islam does not prohibit women from leading prayers for women and for their children. Islam also does not endorse mixed prayer with men and women together, shoulder-to-shoulder, so as to protect against immoral activities in the mosque.

Summary

At the advent of Islam, there were many forms of marriage. Muhammad condemned all of them except marriage that was based on the mutual consent of both husband and wife. The guardian of the bride must support such marriage and the bridegroom offers a dowry to his wife. There are rules governing Islamic marriage, the bedrock of building a successful family in Islam. In the early days of Islam, Muslim women enjoyed a lot of freedom. But as Islam expanded to different areas and encountered diverse cultures, women's status and their freedom began to change and decrease drastically to the extent that women were considered second-class citizens. That sad situation remained until the beginning of the 20th century when Muslim women began to regain their status and became aware of the vital roles they could play in society. Oftentimes, the Muslim elites, with the support of some Muslim scholars (*ulama*), set rules restraining the freedom of women and insisted that their place must be at home. In reality, women, according to the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, are equal to men in terms of their duties toward God. They are responsible for their actions and accountable for their deeds. However, their duties and obligations differ from those of men because they have numerous roles to play at different times.

There exists no injunction in the *Qur'an* that implies that a woman must only work at home. She can work at home, preferably, but she can also engage in any lawful job outside her home when there is a need to do so. What matters in Islam is her modesty, at home or in public. Islam requires a Muslim woman to dress properly and cover her head so as not to become an object of attraction to men or prey to sick-minded people. When she reaches the age of puberty, she may marry

or delay marriage until she is ready. After marriage her role shifts and increases; she has more responsibilities and duties. There are also many obligations that her husband, parents, and others have to render to her because she is a role model in the Muslim community and is entrusted with the upbringing of the new generation and creating leaders of tomorrow.

The majority of Muslim women choose to wear (*hijab*) head-cover by their own choice. They perceive *hijab* as a measure and a shield against irresponsible men in society. Those who wear *hijab* feel more secure in modern day America, where women have been perceived as tools of advertisement. The media exploits their bodies for commercial purposes. Islam frees a woman to be herself and worship *Allah* as she is commanded. By practicing Islam and wearing a head-cover, she is not evidencing her oppression but freeing herself from the Western exploitation and barbarism that has permeated our societies under the pretext of modernity and progress.

Another important issue that draws criticism from non-Muslims and some Muslims as well is the arranged-marriage, whereby a minor (an underage girl) is offered in marriage through her parents to someone else without her consent. Such practice exists in some parts of the Muslim world: in Africa, Pakistan, India and some Arab domains. Despite its existence and practice, Islam does not encourage it at all. When it happened during Muhammad's time, he objected to it and gave the lady involved the choice to divorce her husband if she wanted. It must be pointed out that when a minor is given in marriage to a man, he would not have a sexual relationship with her until she matures and reaches the age of puberty. Any illegal relationship with a minor before puberty receives a severe punishment in Islam.

Further, both wife and husband should live a harmonious life, respect one another and discharge their duties. But if the marriage fails and both spouses cannot live amicably with one another, Islam allows divorce. Through it, both put an end to an unhealthy marriage instead of living with stress and discomfort. Of course, Muslims turn to divorce as a last resort and is not the first solution as many wrongly practice. As man can divorce his wife, she too can divorce her husband. Marriage in Islam is a social and legal contract. Since both can enter into it freely, they can also get out of it freely.

Another challenge faced by Muslim women is the allegation that she represents a half of human being and therefore she receives a half of what a man receives when it comes to inheritance. The fact is she inherits from her relatives according to her financial obligations in the family. Where she bears no financial responsibilities, she inherits less. Islam does not consider a woman one-half of a human being. She has her rights and duties just like the man does.

As far as Islam is concerned, polygamous marriage is permitted when the need for it arises. Only the rich can afford marrying more than one wife. There are rules and regulations that the husband must take into consideration, especially the issue of equality among his wives. However, since Islam permits it, it is lawful even though it has to be regulated and should never be used as a weapon against women or the first wife. Muslim scholars argue that Islam allows polygamy when there is a shortage of men as a result of war, natural disaster, or as a remedy in case of the chronic illness or barrenness of the wife, especially when the husband desperately wants to have a child as an heir. Of course, modern women give no credence to this concept. They perceive these reasons as weak justifications and allege that Muslim men marry many women only to satisfy their sexual desires. There is some dispute as to the validity of this argument.

Finally, monogamous marriage is normally the rule and is preferable in Islam while polygamy is an exception. With economic hardship in much of the Muslim world, polygamy is on the decline. More and more people have monogamous marriages because the man cannot afford to take care of two wives or raise many children. When it comes to leadership, women and men are equal and they can lead wherever they want except in the daily five prayers or Friday prayers in public. In all other areas, they are equal even though women have been prevented from leadership positions not because of Islam but because of the patriarchy in the societies in which they live. And Islam should not be blamed for that.

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Chapter IX

Islam and Social Life

Introduction

A practical Muslim draws no line between the sacred and the profane. To him, all aspects of life are holy; he perceives his daily activities an act of worship. He makes sure that his prayers, devotion, his life and death serve his Creator, *Allah*. While every individual is responsible and required to fulfill his duties and obligations toward himself, his fellow human beings, and his God, his relationship to his society is also very crucial. In fact, he begins his daily life by answering the call to prayer (*adhan*) in order to join his fellow worshippers in glorifying God in the Morning Prayer (*salat al-fajr*). This call, which resonates in his ears, invites him to answer God, to come to success, and to alert him that worshipping God early in the morning is better than sleeping. He wakes up and joins others in worship. Thus, Muslims begin their day with social interaction: they stand in the same row, shoulder to shoulder and listen to the words of God. After the prayer, they greet one another and ask about those who are absent. If some of the absentees are sick, others volunteer to visit them; if they are found to be in difficulty or in great need, they attempt to assist them. The daily prayer bonds them together as one community (*ummah*). Therefore, the first place of interaction for Muslims is the mosque. It is at the mosque that he is introduced to his community and there he begins to feel a sense of greater belonging.

The Mosque: The Center of Social Interaction

A mosque is any place or area where Muslims pray. Literally, it means a place where people kneel down for worship, a place of prostration. The mosque can be at home, at school, in a garden, on board an airplane, in prison, or anywhere else that is clean. The earth as a whole is a mosque for Muslims. Prophet Muhammad said that God made the earth a mosque, a place of prostration. Hence, a Muslim can pray wherever he wants, provided the place is clean. Muslims who live in the West or in the U.S. occasionally utilize local churches, synagogues, community centers, or convention halls for their Friday prayer. While Muslims can offer prayer at any place on earth, they are encouraged to build their own mosques.

The greatest mosque in Islam is the *Ka'aba* (the black cubic house) at Mecca. This mosque is believed to be the first place of worship of God on earth. Even though many Muslims believe that Abraham built this structure, there are a few scholars who claim that Prophet Adam built the *Ka'aba* and that it was rebuilt by Abraham after it had been destroyed. Centuries after Abraham lived, the *Ka'aba* was turned into a warehouse of idols by the local Arabs. It was Prophet Muhammad who freed it from idols when he conquered Mecca in 630 C. E. Prophet Muhammad also built the first mosque for Muslims in Medina in 623 C. E. The Prophet's mosque (*masjid al-nabawi*) was designated for worship, a center for Islamic learning and social activities. Mosque activities include the performance of the daily prayers, and the teaching and learning of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Discussing social issues in the mosque allows Muslims to interact, mingle with and relate to one another. This relationship strengthens their sense of belonging as a community (*ummah*).

The mosque usually contains an area for ablution (cleansing the body, *wudu'*), which precedes the act of prayer. The mosque has a *mihrab* (a prayer niche) that is often richly decorated. The *mihrab* points to the direction of *Ka'aba*, the black cubic house in Mecca. At the corner of the mosque, there are minarets from where the *adhan* (call to prayer) is made. The voice from the minarets summons Muslims five times daily, not only to worship, but to seek success (*falah*), a metaphor for being a part of a humane society that values the moral existence.

Generally the interior of the mosque is decorated: the floor with carpets or decorated mats, the walls with texts from the *Qur'an* that are beautifully ornamented with arabesque, calligraphy and geometric patterns that befit the mosque. Great attention is paid to these ornaments so that they do not distract believers from concentrating on their worship. Some mosques do not have these decorations at all. Muslims do not use pews or sit on chairs during their prayers, except for those who are sick. They pray on the floor, in an empty space, free of distraction. Since the act of prayer involves putting their foreheads on the floor, they do not wear shoes during prayers and they do not walk on the carpets with their shoes on. They always remove their shoes before prayer. Of course, socks are allowed. However, if they pray in the Sahara or at the park where there is no carpet, they can put on their shoes as long as the shoes are clean.

At prayer, Muslims stand side-by-side with one another on the same row. Prayer is the highest form of devotion and submission to God. They praise God and submit to Him with humility by bowing and prostrating. Though the individuals are from diverse cultures and wear different clothes, they worship together regardless of their race or social status. No one is higher than another before God. Even the Imam dresses in the same attire as other Muslims: there is no discrimination in Islam, no hierarchy. Muslims believe that the congregation prayer in the mosque generates and consolidates social cohesiveness among believers. They meet each other and come to know one another better.

In these congregational prayers, there is no king or subject, rich or poor, white or colored, first or second-class citizen. All worshippers stand shoulder to shoulder and worship in the most disciplined manner. As they stand by one another, a spirit of mutual affection grows, and compassion for one another is aroused, particularly when one notices that the person at his side, either right or left, is disabled or crippled. Those who cannot get to the mosque are asked about the reason and cause of their absence and are visited if they are sick or are experiencing some difficulty or stress. What really binds believers together is that they all understand that they are creatures of God and are privileged to serve and worship Him as He commands. Attending the daily prayer in the mosque is one of the major means of socialization and interaction in Islam.

The Islamic city (where many Muslims reside) ..., unmistakably embodied such dialectic unity. For its minarets soared up from the heart and hubbub of the market into the open serenity of the sky, imparting holiness to place and time. The flow of time was not filtered through strictly partitioned and delimited hours and minutes, but patterned according to the rhythm of the muezzin's five daily chanted calls to prayer (and to success), and so pulsed with life and growth as it swelled or shrank with the change of days and seasons, thereby regulating through gentle successive beats all the activities of body and soul together. Thus, instead of suffering rigid segmentation into equally measured and permanently fixed clockwork units, life's stream poured through such fluid divisions as dawn, morning, noon, afternoon, dusk and evening. To each portion of the day corresponded appropriate offerings of worship implicating the soul and physical activities, which put the material body to work.²⁴⁴

Muslims complete each prayer by wishing each other well with the phrase: *peace and mercy of God be onto you*. Those who intend to learn more about Islam after the prayer stay with the Imam for instruction on Islamic education. Others disperse to seek their daily livelihoods. Islam instructs that every capable Muslim male should work to feed himself and his family. If he does not work, he will be unable to fulfill some of the requirements of Islam such as giving support to the poor (*Zakat*), and he will also be dependent on others, something that Islam abhors.

At noon, a Muslim stops whatever he is doing and offers the noon prayer individually or in congregation. He then takes his lunch thereby refreshing his soul and body simultaneously. He returns to his work or task until the afternoon prayer (*asr*) intervenes, which allows him again a space of repose. His daily activities end with the sunset prayer (*maghrib*), which, in most cases, is offered at the local mosque; he meets again with his fellow Muslims. They pray together, chat and discuss

244 A. Bouhdiba and M. Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi, ed., *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture* (France: Unesco Publishing, 1998), pp. 392-393.

what happened during the day. Often times, Muslims take their dinner between the sunset and night prayers. Others wait until they perform their night prayer (*ishai*) before taking their dinner.

The above description is an example of the daily routine of many Muslims in many Islamic countries, particularly of those who reside in rural areas. The situation is somewhat different in urban settings. A few companies in America and Europe allow Muslim workers to pray at work; they provide them with space to do so as well. Thus, a Muslim begins his day with prayer in the morning and ends it with prayer in the evening. Throughout the day, he interacts with fellow Muslims. By performing these prayers together, their hearts are united as they create and develop strong relationships with each other.

These set prayers were what imparted rhythm to the day according to the period of light, not by a fixed hour, and thereby provided a framework for labor and determined the moments for meetings or appointments. Hence, the time span in which a medieval city lived out its life was not out of time span. In such a (Muslim) city, links between the generations were forged not only on a horizontal level, that is, the level of daily life as lived in the home, the field, and the market, but also along a vertical dimension, whereby the past interlocked with the present. Time followed its course unhurriedly, without the individual or his society being aware of any change or break in conditions.²⁴⁵

Generally, the mosque is built by individuals or by the community and rarely by the government, except in the Arab world, where the majority of mosques are built by the government and the Ministry of Endowment. In any case, after its establishment, it becomes a community's property, which can never be owned again, inherited or sold by individuals. As such, no Muslim or authority can prevent any Muslim from worshipping therein or be ex-communicated from attending the mosque. It is a house of God where every Muslim has equal access. "And to God belong the mosques." (*Qur'an* 72:18). The mosque has its own sacredness and is worthy of due respect. Muslims

take great pride in keeping it clean, protecting and freeing it from any distractions that may keep believers from fully concentrating. Therefore, there are no pictures, statues, idols or images allowed in the mosque.

There are special and distinguished places of worship in Islam that are accorded higher prestige than others. These include the sacred mosque at Mecca, the *Ka'aba*, for being the first house of worship. The second place is the Prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina, which he built for his community and which became the center of learning and activities for the first generation of Muslims. The third place is the sacred mosque in Jerusalem, *masjid al-Aqsa*, the furthest mosque, a sacred spot where Muslims believe that Muhammad made his historical journey to heaven (*miraj*), and where he faced Medina in prayer for sixteen months before God gave him permission to face Mecca instead.

In a mosque, because it is a sanctuary and a place where communication is made possible between humans and God, there are certain behaviors and actions that are prohibited therein. These include selling and buying as well as announcing lost items. There should be no fighting or shouting. Also, excessive decoration, particularly the hanging of expensive items like a chandelier, has not received favorable approval from Muslim scholars, who consider such a decoration an imitation of Christians and Jews. Every mosque is supposed to be free of distraction. Most mosques are small and used by residents in the immediate neighborhood. These mosques provide facilities for ablution, restrooms and large spaces in the interior where believers perform their prayers. All mosques have a *mihrab* which points to the direction of *Ka'aba* in Mecca. Nowadays, the mosque is a center of activities. In America, most mosques are called Islamic Centers.

The mosque provides a place for men to rest, to socialize, to take time out from a busy day in order to meditate for a while, even to eat, as well of course, to perform obligatory daily (prayers) *salats*. After school, boys may go to the mosque for instruction in *Qur'an*, recitation or, nowadays in crowded, noisy cities like Cairo, to do homework.²⁴⁶

245 *Ibid.*, p. 393.

246 Frederick Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (NY: Macmillan, 1994), p. 296.

Friday Prayer: The Weekly Interaction

Another weekly occasion that brings a large number of Muslims together every week is the Friday prayer (*salat al-jum'at*). Muslims are commanded in the *Qur'an* to attend Friday prayer. It replaces the noon prayer (*Zuhr*) on Friday.

O ye who believe, when proclamation is made for prayer on the day of the assembly (Friday), endeavor to come to the remembrance of *Allah* and leave off bargaining. That is better for you, if you have knowledge. Then when the prayer is finished, disperse abroad in the land and seek the bounty of *Allah*, but call *Allah* frequently to mind so that you will prosper. (*Qur'an* 62:9-10).

Friday mosques are historically important educational centers as well. Muslims meet on Fridays to worship God, review their spiritual account of the week, and confirm their religious bonds and social solidarity on a moral and spiritual foundation.²⁴⁷ Normally, there is only one major Friday mosque in a big city, but as Muslims grow in number, many other Friday mosques have been established to meet the needs of the Muslim community.

The Friday mosque is a multipurpose building where important public announcements and proclamations are made, crowds are gathered in times of crisis — for example, to rally support for defense—and where at the Friday worship service, the ruler's name is mentioned in the sermon, thus demonstrating his continued authority.²⁴⁸

Friday mosques have a *minbar* (a pulpit) from which the Imam (one who leads the prayer) gives the sermon. The Imam is chosen on his merits on the basis of his religious knowledge and piety. The pulpit at times may be a raised platform, as in the U.S., or may be a set of stairs

leading to a small stage closed in by a rail, as is utilized in many Muslim countries.

Friday prayer takes place at approximately at noon on every Friday. Although a Muslim can offer other prayers at home or work, Friday prayer must be performed in congregation with other Muslims at the mosque. While some Muslim scholars suggest that there should be at least forty people to form a quorum for Friday prayer, other scholars allow a minimum number of twelve Muslims or less, males or females. Attendance at Friday mosque is an expression of being a member of a Muslim community. When they meet, they listen to a sermon by an Imam who educates them about their religion and their responsibilities toward themselves, their God, and society. While some Imams address religious issues in their sermons, others utilize this opportunity to address or comment on social and political issues, and encourage believers to support their communities. The Imam also calls upon the government to find solutions to some problems facing the community, like poverty, drug abuse, and other critical issues. However, many Friday mosques in Muslim countries serve the interests of the ruling government, which actually appoints the Imams who lead Friday prayers. Nevertheless, most mosques are free from political control and the tyranny of the government.

Further, attending Friday prayer fosters unity among Muslims and enables them to really come to know one another. While Friday is a holiday in some Arab countries, it is not considered an official holiday in many Muslim countries. After prayer, Muslims are encouraged to disperse and seek the bounties of *Allah*. The majority of Muslims who attend Friday prayer returns to their work after the prayer. It is pertinent to note that oftentimes business is conducted outside many Friday mosque facilities, even in Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Islam does not forbid its followers from engaging in trade or business immediately after prayer because working and providing for oneself and for one's family is an act of worship in Islam. Undoubtedly, congregation prayer on Friday or on any other day is a unique demonstration of unity in purpose and action of plural piety and humility before God, of effective solidarity among Muslims of public order and mutual response.²⁴⁹ It has been expressed that the

249 Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1975), p. 70.

247 Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1975), p. 71.

248 *Ibid.*, p. 295.

Muslim Friday prayer is the only congregation where people bury their racism and come together regardless of their culture and ethnicity. In other traditions such as Christianity, the Sunday prayer is where people practice their segregations; where Catholics go to Catholic churches, Anglicans go to Anglican Churches and Baptists to Baptist churches. In Islam, Muslims pray together on Friday in any mosque that is close to their residence or place of work. At any Friday mosque in the U.S., for example, one meets people from all over the world. Shiites and Sunnis pray together.

Eid: The Annual Muslim Festival

There are two major festivals in Islam: *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*. *Eid al-Fitr* marks the breaking of fasting at the end of the month of *Ramadan*. It is celebrated on the first day of the tenth month of the Islamic calendar (*Shawwal*). *Eid al-Adha* commemorates the feast of sacrifice at the end of pilgrimage to Mecca. It occurs on the tenth day of the last month of the Islamic calendar (*Zul Hijjah*). It marks the sacrifice that Prophet Abraham made in an attempt to fulfill the covenant he made with God. In the *Qur'an* 37:99-111, it is mentioned that Abraham promised to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God. When the time for the actual sacrifice came, he informed Ishmael about his dream to fulfill his covenant. Ishmael surrendered to his father without question. When God recognized Abraham's intention and readiness to sacrifice his son, God substituted him with a lamb at a place called *Mina*, a suburb of Mecca. Thus, Muslims sacrifice lamb today at *Mina* in remembrance of the blessing that God bestowed upon Abraham and his son Ishmael.²⁵⁰

On both festivals (*Eids*), Muslims gather for prayer in the morning and express their thanks to God for the blessings and protection He showered upon them for the fasting, which they have successfully completed, and for the ability to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Family and friends meet and celebrate *Eid*. *Eid* lasts for three days. Muslims eat together and exchange valuable gifts. On *Eid* days, Muslims wear their best attire and women put on their colorful dresses. Kids visit their relatives and receive gifts and toys. *Eid* days are also national

²⁵⁰ Muslims believe that both Ishmael and Isaac are prophets of God. Their stories are mentioned in the *Qur'an*.

holidays in most Muslim countries. Many Muslims who live abroad or work or study away from their families travel home to celebrate with their parents and relatives. The occasion of *Eid* entails a unique atmosphere of reunion for all Muslims.

While *Eid al-Fitr* marks the celebration of thanksgiving to God for a complete month of fasting, it also manifests a social and humanitarian spirit in that those who complete the fast must distribute alms, five pounds worth of local food (or its equivalent in money), to the poor so that every Muslim can have something with which to celebrate *Eid*. On the same level, those who complete their pilgrimage rites in Mecca will offer their sacrifice by slaughtering a lamb, goat, sheep, camel, or cow. Those Muslims who do not perform pilgrimage (*hajj*) will also make similar sacrifice wherever they reside, if they are financially capable of doing so. Muslims are encouraged to eat part of the sacrificial animals they offer and distribute the rest to the poor, friends and neighbors. However, faithful Muslims do recognize that the sacrifice of animals is in remembrance of Abraham's attempt to sacrifice his son. Sacrifice is an expression of righteous obedience to God. Certainly, God does not eat the meat and does not need the blood of the sacrificial animal.

God does not receive their flesh or their blood; rather He receives from you righteousness. Thus, has He subjugated them to you in order that you may magnify God by glorifying Him, in that He has guided you. Proclaim glad tidings to those who perform righteous deeds. (*Qur'an* 22:37).

This form of thanksgiving, says Abdalati, "is a wholesome combination of spiritual devotion and humanitarian benevolence, a combination which can hardly be found in any other religion except in Islam."²⁵¹

Further, on *Eid*, all Muslims are required to attend *Eid* prayer, even the women. They join in order to receive the blessings of the *Eid*. The prayer is performed after sunrise and before noon. It is often conducted in an open space or in a big mosque or hall to accommodate many people. Muslims who reside in the same city pray together to express their solidarity. However, *Eid* prayer can be offered at more than one place if the city has a large population of Muslims. After *Eid* prayer, the

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Imam gives a sermon, which has two parts. In part one, he thanks God for all His mercy and blessings upon His creatures; he praises Him by repeating the phrase "*Allahu Akbar - God is Great*" many times. In the second part, he admonishes Muslims to be committed to their religion; he calls their attention to the importance of almsgiving and sacrifice for the sake of God. He exhorts them to be more serviceable to their communities and attend to the needs of the poor and orphans. When the prayer is finished, Muslims greet and hug one another and return home with joy. Muslim's *Eid*, says Abdalati,

[It] is a day of peace (with one another), of thanksgiving, a day of forgiveness and moral victory, a day of good harvest and remarkable achievement and a day of festive remembrance (of God).²⁵²

While Muslims celebrate the *Eid al-Adha* on the same day all over the world and the prayer is uniform, the customs and feasts attached to it differ from one country to another. For instance, in many cities in Nigeria and other West African countries, the king donates the sacrificial animal regardless of whether he is a Muslim or not. Thus, after *Eid* prayer, Muslims pay him a courtesy visit at his palace before they return home. This Yoruba culture is incorporated into Islamic tradition. In Senegal, many take the sacrificial animal to the sea (the Atlantic Ocean) on the day of *Eid* and wash it before it is slaughtered. Such practices have been frowned upon by some orthodox scholars who argue that they are un-Islamic practices which must be stopped. Nonetheless, the majority of Muslims in this area of the world do not heed the advice of scholars on these issues. They argue that there is nothing wrong with washing the sacrificial animal or visiting the king, especially when he recognizes Islamic festivals, donates and supports Muslims. Thus, local custom is given preference over religious tenets at times. In North America and Western countries, Muslims go back to their work on *Eid* days except when it falls on weekends. *Eids* are not as festive in America as they are in many Muslim countries. Muslims celebrate within their social networks and families, but it is very different from living in a country where the majority of people, businesses, and government recognize and honor the occasion. The situation is totally

different in the Muslim world. *Eid* is to get out of the home, visit and party with neighbors, friends, and relatives.

Mawlid: The Celebration of the Birthday of Prophet Muhammad

Another celebrated feast among many Muslims is *Mawlid*, the celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, which was set on the twelfth of *Rabi'ul Awwal*, the third month of the Islamic calendar. While there is enough evidence to prove that Muhammad died in the third month, on the twelfth of *Rabi'ul Awwal* in 632 C. E., there are conflicting statements about the exact date of his birth. From an historical point of view, this celebration, which marks the deep-felt veneration for Muhammad, is an innovation (*bid'at*). Muhammad and his immediate disciples did not practice it. It is a practice that receives no approval from the majority of the orthodox Muslim scholars. Hence, it is labeled un-Islamic. However, those who do it argue that Muslims were blessed and guided to the right path through Prophet Muhammad and therefore marking his birthday with celebration amounts to appreciation and recognition of the immense impact he had upon his followers in particular and upon human beings in general.

Al-Hafiz al-Suyuti, a Shafi'ite jurist, was asked about the celebration of *Mawlid*. The question was whether it is allowed or not and whether God would reward those who participate in it. He answered that the origin of *Mawlid* celebration, whereby people gathered, recited some portion of the *Qur'an*, read the early history of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and narrated some miraculous events that occurred during his youth was a good and an acceptable innovation (*bid'at hasanah*). Those who celebrate it and do not do evil things therein will receive rewards from God. This is because the *Mawlid* marks Prophet Muhammad's essential role in Islam. It is an expression of happiness and gratitude for the birth of a Prophet, whom God sent to be mercy to all humanity. Al-Suyuti also responded to Shaykh Taj al-Din, Umar bin Ali al-Lakhmi, a Maliki jurist, who unreservedly condemned the celebration of the birthday of Muhammad. Al-Suyuti reproduced al-Lakhmi's evidence, analyzed it and critically refuted each part one by one.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

In addition, Al-Suyuti mentioned that Abul Fadl, Ahmad bin Hajar, was asked about the *Mawlid*. He (Ibn Hajar) answered that it was an innovation (*bid'at*) because the righteous ancestors (*al-salaf al-salih*) of the first three generations of Muslims did not celebrate it. However, he added that some practices during the *Mawlid* were right while others were wrong. If people limit themselves to the good deeds and acceptable practices during the *Mawlid*, they will not be blameworthy. But if they engage in unlawful practices, their deeds will be considered unlawful and thus unacceptable.

Abul Fadl, Ahmad bin Hajar, argued that he had found strong evidence and analogy for the celebration of the *Mawlid*. That evidence is reported in al-Bukhari and Muslim's *Hadith* books. There it is reported that when Prophet Muhammad arrived in Medina, he found the Jews fasting on the tenth day of Muharram, the day of *Ashura*. He asked them why they were fasting. He was told that it was the day when God destroyed Pharaoh and gave victory to Moses, and that they were fasting on that day to express their thanks to God. Ibn Hajar inferred from that story the legality of expressing thanks for a blessing that God bestows upon a person on a particular day. The blessing may be through attaining or winning good things, or that God protects a person from evil or from an enemy. A Muslim may repeat this expression of thankfulness every year or at any time. This expression of gratitude can take many forms or shapes. It can be through prayer, worship, fasting, giving support to the needy, feeding the poor, or by recitation of the *Qur'an*. Then Ibn Hajar asked: "Is there any blessing greater than the emergence of Prophet Muhammad, who was the prophet of mercy?" He thus concluded that the date of his birth could be set aside for expressing thanks to God, just like the story of Moses when God delivered him from the peril of Pharaoh and his atrocity against the Jews. And as long as what is done on that occasion is lawful, participants get rewards from God. If they indulge in unlawful acts, their actions will be rejected and considered wrong.²⁵³ Without doubt,

253 Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Hajar al-Haythami, *Tuhfat al-Muhtaj fi sharh al-Minhaj* (Beirut: Dar Itha al-Turath al-Arabi, n. d.), vol. 7: 424-425. For more information and debates about the *Mawlid*, see: Shaykh Isma'il bin Muhammad al-Ansari, *Al-Qawl al-Fast fi Hukm al-Ihtijal bi Mawlid Khayr al-Rusul [the distinctive debate about the judgment on the celebration of the birthday of the best Prophet (peace be upon him)]* (Saudi Arabia, Riyadh: Dar al-Ifa', 1985).

Mawlid has its good and bad aspects. In many West African countries, it is through the celebration of the *Mawlid* that many young people are enrolled into Islamic schools. The activities and drama about the life of the Prophets, which the kids perform, convinces many parents that organized Islamic schools are great centers of learning, vibrant with activities and creativity.

Islamic Education: Mosque as the Center of Learning

Seeking knowledge is a religious duty upon every Muslim, male and female. The primary goal of education in Islam is to know God and learn how to become a better human being. Education is a religious duty and therefore its acquisition has always been a prime concern in Islam. Muslims recognize the importance of knowledge by making reference to the first verse revealed to Muhammad at Mecca (*Qur'an* 96:1-2), which instructed him to read. Islam demands that Muslims become literate. They believe that Muhammad could not read or write; he was an *ummīy* (unlettered person). Some Muslims assume that his inability to read and write was a sign of his prophethood, for how was he able to bring such a wonderful message as the *Qur'an* when he did not go to school? Even though he himself could neither read nor write, he surrounded himself with scribes and literate people who wrote down his revelation and documented whatever he did or said. Muhammad instructed his followers to seek knowledge through all means, even if they have to go as far as China to get it.²⁵⁴

The early Muslims argued that the knowledge to be sought was the knowledge of religion only. But as Islam spread and many people converted to it, the scope of knowledge expanded to include all fields of science and all aspects of life. No restriction was made and no limitation was set thereafter. The early Muslims ventured into all disciplines with curiosity, believing that knowledge is wisdom, a

254 The reference to China is to indicate that Muslims should seek knowledge even if it is from far away country like China. Muhammad did not know where China was located then except that it is a far away place. Eventually, Islam spread to China and at present there are about 25 million Muslims in China today. Chinese Muslims have their own unique qualities and it is there are specific mosques for women only. Imams in these mosques are women and attendees are women only.

treasure, which Muslims must acquire. The joy of learning transcends location and is not limited to a few weeks, months or years, but is a life-long search. Learning about Islam, particularly in the mosque, has never been to earn credit hours, but to fully know God and become a humane person. There are no requirements or prerequisites for joining a circle of learning in the mosque. The desire to learn is all that is needed to join, and therefore students from all walks of life: children, adults, farmers, business people, the rich and the poor, males and females, learn at the mosque.

Islamic education for children begins at the mosque in the daily school of life. While many parents instruct their children at home, the majority of them send their kids to the mosque to learn *Qur'anic* recitation and basic Arabic writing, even when their mother tongue is not Arabic. As kids accompany their parents to the mosques during prayer times, they are left with Arabic or *Qur'anic* instructors who teach them about Islam. It is at the mosque where Muslim kids first begin their social lives with other children.

The *Qur'anic* school was its own little world throbbing with life ..., which filled with a considerable place both in the daily activity of young boys and in the daily concern of their adult guardians. A whole network of relations thus came into being between the elementary teachers on the one hand, and the children and their families on the other.²⁵⁵

For Muslim children, learning begins at age four or five. The Prophet advised that children be taught about Islamic prayer at the age of seven, and be disciplined at age ten if they fail to pray regularly. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to find teachers who beat kids in Islamic schools in some Muslim countries. Kids sit cross-legged in front of their teachers and repeat what they have memorized. When the teachers find them inattentive or misbehaved, the child is warned, then disciplined, at times severely. Muhammad Talbi accurately captures this situation when he says:

It was a rare child who did not suffer repeated drubbing and so did not regularly go home to his father from

school in tears. A teacher might actually entrust one of his disciples (or older student) to carry out the flogging, or over-do the punishment to the point of provoking an accident. ... Whence the sort of disputes between instructors and parents set forth in treatises on *Figh*.²⁵⁶

The author himself had been a victim of such harsh punishment both in Islamic and Christian missionary schools when he was young. After two years of receiving harsh discipline nearly every day at Islamic school for drowsing, his father withdrew him from the school despite his mother's insistence on his staying. His mother argued that he should learn how to become a real and strong man. Unfortunately, the author received the same harsh treatment every Monday at the Methodist high school in his town for not attending church services on Sundays and for not practicing Christianity. This author fervently believes that children can become strong people without being physically punished. Flogging kids at school was a common practice in most West African countries and in some other parts of the Muslim world, both in Islamic and Christian schools. Nowadays, flogging students is legally banned in many countries even though the practice continues in some schools.

At the mosques, the youth do not only learn how to read and write they are also taught how to practice Islam, fulfill their obligations and discharge their duties. Great attention is paid to molding their characters. Receiving education at the mosque was free in the olden days, although most parents did offer gifts to their kid's teachers, who consider their job a duty to the community. Girls do not generally receive the same attention in learning the *Qur'an* at the mosque. Their parents teach them at home. And if their parents are affluent and do not have time to teach them, they hire instructors who come to their homes and teach them. But, in general, girls and women receive less education in the Muslim world due to their early marriage and a lack of motivation. Thus, there is a huge gap between boys and girls in terms of education. In the past few decades and at present, many positive changes are taking place in Muslim countries and the number of girls attending schools and colleges is growing rapidly.

²⁵⁵ Bouhdiba and al-Dawalibi, p. 411.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

Adults also join learning circles at the mosque. Advanced and separate topics are offered to them at different times of the day, particularly after morning and sunset prayers. Until the 19th century, when modern schools (*madaris*) were established and new curriculum introduced, the mosques were the place of prayer, the school, the college, the university, and the center of social activities simultaneously. Students received advanced courses at the mosques offered by different scholars, who had established chairs (professorship). Although there are many modern schools and colleges, there are still great numbers of Muslims who receive their educations at the mosques.

It is pertinent to mention here that access to Islamic knowledge is public in Islam. Every individual has the right to learn about his religion. Religious knowledge has never been a monopoly by any particular interest or religious group. Islam, since its inception, made it obligatory on its members to pursue knowledge. Hence, the Prophet instructed parents to teach their children about Islam, spouses to teach their partners, and those in leadership positions must educate those who follow them. No one should be deprived of Islamic knowledge as long as the seeker is interested, whether he is poor or rich. Even prisoners of war who were captured by Prophet Muhammad in 624 C. E in Medina were given the choice of paying money for their freedom or teaching Muslims how to read and write. The teaching was in lieu of paying ransom for their emancipation. In the early and medieval ages, learning was given a high priority. Access to knowledge was open to everyone regardless of his or her social status.

Indeed, one might consider illiteracy to have been virtually impossible for any conscientious, practicing and fully observant Muslim, given his obligation to memorize at least a portion of the *Qur'an* and grasp a minimum of the knowledge enabling him to meet such various mandatory religious requirements as his scheduled prayers, his scheduled keeping of the fast, his regular payment of *Zakat* and so on. Such incumbent rules were, in fact, what led to the spread of education: through both the elementary *Qur'anic* schools (the

Kuttab, plural *Kattatib*) and the mosques — at any rate, in the major cities.²⁵⁷

In the U.S. and Europe today, where Muslims are in the minority, Muslims have established a few full-time private elementary schools, a handful of secondary institutions and several Sunday schools to instruct their children and anyone interested about Islam. Muslims do not believe in separation of Church and State. To them, the law of God as revealed in the *Qur'an* and the authentic traditions of the Prophet should govern human lives. Life should be lived to its fullest, but one should also not neglect the spiritual aspect of human life.

Unlike their Western neighbors, the Moslems were able to achieve a pleasant balance between the real and the ideal, the natural and the supernatural, the temporal and the eternal, the scientific and the theological. While other-worldly concern, attention to the life hereafter, and the search for salvation channeled and preoccupied Western education, the Moslems accepted the basic ingredients of their faith and added to their study of theology and philosophy countless dimensions directed at experimentation with the observable and the immediate. They did not retreat to their caves in an effort to find personal solitude, salvation, and peace; but they welcomed the exchange of ideas in the open market place. It is true that Moslems were willing to memorize their Koran and accept the tenets of their faith quite deadily, but they left the doors of their minds and laboratories open to study mathematics, medicine, chemistry, astronomy, geography, and other academic areas.²⁵⁸

Muslim children both in Europe and America receive a minimal Islamic education of one or two hours per week at Sunday schools. Most Islamic centers and mosques in the U.S. have Sunday schools that children attend for nearly six or eight years, from the time they

257 *Ibid.*, p. 410.

258 Richard E. Gross, ed., *Heritage of American Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1962), p. 142.

enter elementary school until they graduate from junior or high school. Many parents urge Muslim leaders in the U.S. to establish private high schools and Muslim colleges. That dream has not yet been attained. The only Muslim community that has many high schools in big cities is Sister Clara Muhammad high schools, which were originally established by Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam between 1933 and 1975. Under Elijah's son, Warithu-Deen Mohammad, Sister Clara schools triumph. Graduates from these schools win admission to universities and colleges around the country. African American Muslims are proud of Sister Clara's schools, for they provide quality and religious education for their students.

There are three stages of Islamic education: elementary, secondary and higher education. These stages were fully established and patronized by Caliph Harun Rasheed, a contemporary of Charlemagne. Harun Rasheed saw the dire need for elementary schools and established a school and attached it to each mosque. In these schools, reading, writing, simple numeration, memorization of the *Qur'an* and the precepts of Islam are taught. The elementary schools are open to boys and girls of all ages, so every child can have some basic education. Poorer children might remain for only a few years before being forced by economic necessity to join the labor force. The teaching itself is free but the boarding must be paid by the pupil's parents.

Graduation from elementary school occurs with what is termed *Khatm*, sealing, the completion of reading, mastering of writing, and memorizing the whole or some portions of the *Qur'an*. *Khatm* graduation is marked with celebration. The teacher, his pupils and their parents and relatives invite members of their community to their home or to the community's mosque to share the joy of completion of the *Qur'an*. It resembles the Jewish Bar Mitzvah except that *khatm* has nothing to do with a puberty rite. *Khatm's* celebration has become an occasion for a big feast in some Muslim countries. It draws large gatherings both in West Africa and in South East Asia. It is also an opportune occasion to enroll new children into Arabic elementary schools and to show how successful and dutiful *Qur'anic* teachers are in imparting Islamic knowledge to new generations, the Muslim leaders of tomorrow.

The secondary level follows the elementary stage. This stage is also called "*aththanawi*." In West Africa, it is known as "*al-Tawjihi*," the science stage. In elementary school, the focus is on reading, writing and learning the basic tenets of Islam. At the secondary level, great attention is paid to comprehension of the materials. Students receive instruction on grammar, poetry, history, the science of behavior (*adab*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), *Hadith*, the interpretation of the *Qur'an* (*tafsir*), literature, rhetoric, the life of the Prophet (*sirah*), etc. The duration of learning at this stage depends on the teacher and the cleverness of the student. The instructors are at liberty to draw from any curriculum they deem fit for their students. At times, it is a written curriculum, and on others, it is a study of selected books. Students graduate when their teachers give them permission (*ijazah*) to go out and teach what they have learned on their behalf, or teach classes in the absence of the teacher, or represent them in another city. Such a deputation implies that the appointed student is competent and has matured enough in that particular subject. It is a signal that he may leave the teacher if he wants and begin his own career as an independent teacher. It should be pointed out that mastery of the *Qur'an* and its meanings is essential for continued success and acceptance as teachers.

In many Muslim countries, however, few women attend secondary school. The separation of women at learning centers was a late development in Islamic history. Nevertheless, many girls receive educations at home through their parents or through hired teachers. The situation is changing rapidly in the Muslim world. There are far more opportunities for girls today to enroll in both elementary and high schools than ever before. College education is now open to girls in all Muslim countries. However, the numbers of female students who graduate from colleges are far less than those of male graduates.

The third stage, advanced education, mirrors an advanced level of learning where students are exposed to different disciplines. Scholars (*ulama*) offer a variety of courses to their students in their homes, in mosques or at the institutions. The scope of curriculum at this higher level is indeed impressive and encompasses literature, jurisprudence, law, lexicography, philosophy, astronomy, the science of *Hadith* and its narration (*'ilm al-Hadith wa rijal*), medicine, surgery, anatomy, pharmacy, chemistry, physics, algebra, and so forth. Candidates in

advanced stages of learning have no time limit for graduation. Their graduation depends on their teachers as well as themselves. Teachers at this stage are generally not adequately paid. However, a few do receive stipends from Islamic endowments (*waqf*) and from rich individuals who patronize Islamic education. Many Muslim scholars prefer not to be paid by the government or through endowment funds in order to retain their academic integrity and freedom of expression and thought. Thus, in the medieval age as well as at present, some scholars maintain their own businesses and have their own professions. They do not depend on what they earn from teaching for living.

The Establishment of Organized Schools (*Nizamiyyah*) and Colleges

Before the establishment of organized schools (*madaris*) by the Seljuk vizier Nizamul Mulk, Muslims received educations by accompanying or living with great teachers, whose houses served as schools. After the introduction of Nizamiyyah schools, scholars were appointed and paid by their patrons or by the government. Towards the end of the 10th century, the Fatimid Shi'ite dynasty in Egypt opened *Jami' al-Azhar* (Al-Azhar University), which became the center of learning for the whole Muslim world and still is. It is considered one of the first Muslim universities in the world. Similar organized and funded colleges were established in Egypt, North Africa, Baghdad, and Spain. The most distinctive features of the Nizamiyyah schools was the creation of new methods of instruction, the systematic organization of courses, the expansion of the content of the courses, and the training of qualified scholars and specialists in all fields of Islamic knowledge. These colleges enhanced the establishment of hundreds of Islamic libraries and boarding houses throughout the Muslim world.

Islamic education also flourished in Spain between the 8th and 15th centuries. Muslim caliphs in Spain established educational institutions, funded them, and equipped them with qualified scholars in all areas of knowledge. Those colleges produced such eminent scholars of Islam as Ibn Sina [Avicenna] (d. 1037 C. E.), Ibn Khaldun (d. 1395 C. E.), Ibn Hazm, Ibn Rushd [Averroes] (d. 1198 C. E.) and others. Spain, particularly Cordova and Toledo, became the centers of knowledge in

Europe; it attracted many students and eminent scholars from Europe and other parts of the world.

To Cordova came from all parts of the world students eager to cultivate poetry, to study the sciences, or to be instructed in divinity or law; so that it became the meeting place of the eminent in all matters, the abode of the learned, and the place of resort for the studious; its interior was always filled with the eminent and the noble of all countries, its literary men and soldiers were continually vying with each other to gain renown, and its precincts never ceased to be the arena of the distinguished, and the repository of the true and virtuous.²⁵⁹

It is pertinent to record here that many European leaders studied in Spain under Muslim rule and at Muslim institutions. Paul Monroe pointed out that:

Gerbert (later Pope Sylvester II) studied in Spain; Gerard of Cremona sought a copy of the *Amages* in Toledo; Daniel de Morlai left the University of Paris for Toledo, and brought thence to England many precious books; Michael Scott studied at Toledo, and a monk of Monte Cassino named Contantine at Baghdad; Athelard of Bath pursued Arabic science and philosophy in Asia Minor, Egypt, and Spain; while Arabic textbooks in medicine for a long time dominated the course of instruction given at the celebrated medical school at Montpellier.²⁶⁰

In addition, it was through the efforts of Muslims in Spain and Baghdad and through their colleges that Greek, Roman, and Persian works in philosophy, medicine, chemistry, literature, and other classics were translated into Arabic and then from Arabic into Latin and other European languages. Hence, the West owes its renaissance and the academic achievements of the 16th century to Islamic scholars

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

and Muslim rule in Spain. Muslims translated the important ancient books, preserved them, and transmitted them to Europe. Muslims served as a critical bridge between these heritages. Although many Western scholars and historians today deliberately ignore the influence of Islamic scholars and their influence on the West, the debt of Western sciences to Islam and Muslim scientists in Spain cannot be overstated.

Relationships between students and their teachers is cordial and respectful. Students treat their teachers as parents, serve them and hold them in high esteem. They are perceived as spiritual guides and role models rather than ordinary employees who only teach. Students greet and honor their teachers wherever they meet them after graduation. Even where there are disputes and disagreements between teachers and students, respect for the teacher still remains. In the philosophy of Islamic education, teachers must love their students and treat them as their children, brothers, and sisters. Teachers should have the student's interest in mind and cultivate in them the love for knowledge and the curiosity to learn, research and subject whatever they learn to critical analysis. They should not overburden their students or humiliate them, for students are their real heirs.

Many foreign students living in the U.S. abhor how American students treat and address their tutors and professors. Lack of respect for teachers, Muslims believe, stems from lack of respect for knowledge itself. Hence, students question their teachers about why they should attend class, why they should be tested by exams, why they cannot choose their own textbooks, and why they cannot learn everything through the Internet. They want to communicate with machines rather than with human beings. The spiritual aspect of learning and seeing teachers as role models and carriers of heritage is unappreciated. In Islamic education, the methodology employed is rich and varied. Islam instructs that teachers and students respect one another and value the knowledge they possess, for it is a blessing from God. All types of education assumed knowledge of the *Qur'an* in Islamic concept, a firm understanding of the requirements of a moral and ethical life and a comprehensive familiarity with spiritual ordinances. Muslims believe that learning is an act of worship. Teachers should be ready to teach and impart knowledge while students must be ready to learn at any

time, any place, and from any experience.²⁶¹ Learning how to relate to one another and behave politely with every human being is been part and parcel of Islamic education and socialization.

The Marriage Ceremony: The Unification of Two Families

Another delightful occasion that brings Muslims together is the marriage ceremony. Islamic marriage (*Nikah*) signifies the unity of wife and husband based on mutual agreement. It is not only a union between two individuals but between two families. From the initiation of the marriage, to the wedding, to living together and, on occasion, to divorce, the parents of both families are involved. Their advice is sought and their decisions affect to a much greater extent than is seen in the West. Muslims do not conceive of marriage as a sacrament that cannot be dissolved. Rather, it is a legal contract in which the rights and duties of both man and woman are laid out in concrete terms and agreed upon. It is a strong bond and commitment from both parties.

Islam encourages its adherents who are financially and physically capable to marry. The ordering of the family is the very basis of the ordering of society in Islam. And the primary purposes of marriage, according to Lamya al-Faruqi, are:

- a) to provide a balance between individualistic needs and the welfare of the group to which the individuals belong;
- b) to provide a stable atmosphere for the rearing of children;
- c) to provide a mechanism for the moral and mutually beneficial control of sexual behavior and procreation;
- d) to assure steady and crucial benefits for women during their childbearing years; and
- e) To provide close emotional gratification for both men and women.²⁶²

Islam discourages celibacy; it is against human nature to permanently curb the sexual desire instinct of human beings. Islam also condemns

261 Gross, p. 160.

262 Lamya al-Faruqi, *Women, Muslim Society and Islam* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1988), pp. 65-66.

marriage between members of the same sex. Both male homosexuality and lesbianism are illegal relationships and immoral practices in Islam.²⁶³ They are unlawful and carry a severe punishment under Islamic law (*Shari'ah*). The lawful and unlawful are defined by God. To Muslims, good is what God commands and evil is what God condemns. Also, fornication, that is, sex outside of wedlock, is emblematic of a disordered society. This is not to say that some Muslims do not fornicate, but to point out that Islam strongly condemns fornication, adultery, and any disapproved sexual relationship with the opposite sex or with the same sex.

Since marriage has been described as one half of faith in Islam, Muslims pay great attention to it. Marriage is always accompanied by an elaborated feast even though the feast is not a prerequisite for its legality. But "it would be hard to imagine Muslim marriage that did not feature merry making, with many guests, music making, dancing, wonderful foods, *Qur'anic* recitations, and brightly colored decorations."²⁶⁴

The requirements and conditions of a valid marriage are detailed in Islamic law books. However, each Muslim group or country conducts the marriage ceremony in quite different ways. A marriage in Saudi Arabia, for instance, differs greatly from a marriage conducted in Aswan in Egypt or Khartoum in Sudan, even though these places are also considered Arab countries. Likewise, a marriage ceremony in Nigeria in West Africa may not resemble a marriage in Malaysia despite the fact that both are perceived as valid Islamic marriages. Wedding ceremonies also vary considerably from country to country. In this section, I'll describe marriage ceremonies among the Muslims of Yorubaland in Nigeria.

The marriage ceremony in Nigeria reflects African traditional culture. The wedding ceremony between Muslims and non-Muslims in Yorubaland is identical, except in their religious aspects. Weddings are closer to old Yoruba tradition. Islam has taken over the Yoruba customs and adapted them to its own use. Among the Yoruba, the wedding lasts for a day or more. The extent of this celebration depends

on the social status of the parents of both families. After the necessary requirements have been met, a date for the wedding is set. On that day, the family's friends and relatives are present. The Imam (a clergy who leads the daily prayer or an Islamic scholar) opens the ceremony with a short prayer and a recitation from the *Qur'an*. This is followed by a short sermon, which focuses on the importance of marriage and the duties and obligations that are expected of both husband and wife. He then asks whether each party agrees to the marriage or has been forced into it. The expected answer is always affirmative - that they consent to the marriage even though, at times, it is an arranged-marriage.

The Imam also finds out whether the dowry has been paid to the bride or not. The exact amount of the dowry is normally not announced to the public. Dowry is a gift from the groom to the bride. It may be an ordinary ring or a copy of the *Qur'an*, or a huge amount of money or any other tangible object. Islam stipulates that the lower the dowry, the happier the marriage, because there is then no unnecessary burden on the husband. Muslims never regard Islamic dowry "an act of buying or selling of the groom," as suggested by some. The dowry (*mahr*) is recommended in the *Qur'an* to be given to the wife as a gift which adds a material element to the spiritual bond of marriage, and makes this innovation honest and forthright. The dowry is the exclusive property of the wife, and without it, no marriage is valid (*Qur'an* 4: 24-25; 5: 5). To Muslims, the dowry is symbolic, a mark of honor and a token of appreciation. It cannot be taken back after consummation. Then the parents are asked for their approval of the marriage and those in attendance are called upon to be witnesses. With the approval of the guardian and the witness of two Muslims, the official marriage ritual (*nikah*) is brought to an end. Then, the Imam and his group begin a special prayer whereby parents offer gifts and pray for the success of the married couple. Relatives of both families give money to the Imam. This session lasts for a few hours. The official ceremony is conducted at the mosque, a hotel or at a hall. Parents and relatives of both parties serve different types of delicious food. At times, the bride's parents perform their own ceremony in their homes.

The bride receives a lot of gifts and attends the night party, which is exclusively arranged by the bride's parents. Local Muslim musicians are invited to entertain. There, the bride is adorned with beautiful clothes,

263 Muslim scholars do not deny the existence of homosexuality but argue that it is a social and emotional orientation of some individuals. They do not believe it is a natural phenomena.

264 Denny, p. 276. (2nd edition, year 2000).

perfumed, and painted with *Hina* and *Kuhl*. She dances at the night party; her husband and relatives give her money. Whatever money or gifts she receives belong to her and from it, at times, the family defrays what has been spent on the ceremony. The most important part is when the bride leaves her home. She no longer belongs to her parent's home but to the house of her husband. She will therefore have to meet with each member of her family before she leaves. This is a remarkable step in her life and it normally results in many tears of joy at being married and becoming a responsible lady. It also brings sadness to the bride and to her family for her leaving her house and comfort zone. Ironically, some brides do not want to leave their homes at this stage, but then it is too late for them to turn back. When she leaves, the women around her and her relatives or friends congratulate and escort her to her new home. On arriving at her new home, she is received by the female members of the house, who have to offer gifts for those who escort her before she is allowed to enter her new home. There is no special attire for Islamic marriage. Each party wears what it wants. As Farah points out,

The occasion of marriage in Islam is one of the great celebration and festivity throughout the Muslim world. It provides one of the great outlets for social intercourse and enjoyment. In a way, it serves to emphasize the great significance attached to family life as a force for unity in Islamic society.²⁶⁵

With the marriage, a Muslim family is formed and a new life emerges for both man and woman. They shape their life as they begin their journey. It is part of Islamic tradition that a bridegroom spends seven days and nights with his new wife (honey moon days), if she has not married before, or spends three days and nights with her if she was married before. If both husband and wife fulfill their duties and obligations, they enjoy a happy and peaceful marital life. It is the husband who is fully responsible for the maintenance and economic security of the family. He must provide for his wife, if he is capable, with the kind of help and services she used to have before marriage. And according to some scholars, she is not under legal obligation to

do routine housework, although she may do so if she wants.²⁶⁶ Upon marriage, the bride does not have to change her last name to her husband's name. She retains her father's name because she is not the property of her husband. Using her husband's name would deprive her of her real identity.

However, if they fail to discharge their duties, problems may arise. Hence, family members, particularly the parents, can come to the couple's aid and give advice or render the needed support, both materially and spiritually. If they cannot reach an amicable solution, each can seek divorce and separate from the other. Islamic marriage is a contract which both parties entered into freely; they can also get out of it freely without harming one another. Divorce is expected to be the last resort. It should not be the first step when family disputes erupt. And when it happens, Islam suggests a three month waiting period before it takes effect so as to give ample chance for each party to reconsider reunion rather than divorce. Divorce has always been frowned upon in Islam. After divorce, both still have the right to remarry one another two more times without initiating any new dowry or new contract.

The Naming Ceremony: The Birth of a Muslim

The naming ceremony is an important aspect of Islamic culture. It marks one of the most joyful moments in a Muslim's life. After marriage, whose primary objective is procreation and emotional gratification, the Muslim community expects the couple to have a baby. If the couple is found after a year or two to be childless, family members question the couple and advise them to have children. The community offers assistance to them. Nevertheless, members of the community continue to pray for the couple to be blessed with children even if the couple desires not to have one. Living with a wife without having a baby is wrongly perceived as unhealthy or even at times as immoral, particularly if it is the couple who deliberately make that choice. A childless woman is like a tree without fruit or an ocean without a fish, some Muslims wrongly assume. Having children, Muslims argue, brings pride to parents and joy to the family. It is considered the fulfillment of Muhammad's commandment, which states that Muslims should marry and bear many children so that he
266 Abdalati, pp. 115-116.

265 Caesar E. Farah, *Islam* (N.Y: Arron's Educational Series, Inc., 2000), p. 162.

(Muhammad) will be proud of them in the next world for having the largest followers among all the prophets.²⁶⁷ Thus, any attempt by the government to control the population because of issues of poverty or scarcity in the Muslim world falls on deaf ears. If God blesses them with children, Muslims always argue that God will provide for them as well. "Kill not your children on a plea of want; We provide sustenance for you and for them." (*Qur'an* 6: 151)

A child is born in Islam into the true malleable nature of *Fitrab* (pure nature of submission to God) as suggested by Prophet Muhammad. It is his parents, added Muhammad, who make him or her a Jew or a Christian, or a non-believer. The first gift of a parent to his/her new baby is to give him or her a beautiful name. A baby must be given a chance to live a good life. Immediately after the birth, the parents whisper the *Adhan* (the call to prayer) into his ears and put a minuscule piece of date or sweet into his mouth, praying that he will have a happy and prosperous life. Muslims believe and hope that the *Adhan* is what he will be hearing all his life. It is important then that the first phrase the baby hears upon his birth is the word of God. The same word will be said to him when he dies as a Muslim.

On the seventh day, the parents name their babies. The best names in Islam are the ninety nine names/attributes of God. These names are usually preceded by "*abdu*," which means a servant of God. For instance, Rahman will be given to a child as "*abd al-Rahman*," that is, the servant of Beneficent God, *Rahman*. The secondly preferred names are nicknames of the Prophet Muhammad like Ameen, Mukhtar, Sadiq, Musharraf, Awwal. These nicknames are preceded at times with the name Muhammad. Thus, a person called Ameen will be called "Muhammad Ameen, and Mukhtar will be Muhammad Mukhtar."²⁶⁸

In addition, the names of the twenty-five Jewish and Christian prophets mentioned in the *Qur'an* are frequently used in Islam, like Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Iyasa (Jesus), and Ya'qub (Jacob). Muslims also give their children the names of Muslim heroes and scholars in Islamic history like al-Faruq, an honorific nickname of the second Caliph, Umar bin al-Khattab, al-Ghazali, the Muslim philosopher and jurist of the 12th century, or al-Bukhari, the

Muslim traditionalist who collected the sayings (*Hadith*) of Prophet Muhammad. It should be pointed out that Bukhari is the name of the town or area where Imam Bukhari came from in Russia. Thus, Bukhari is neither an Arabic nor an Islamic name, but an adjective that describes the state or place of birth of the bearer. However, in Islamic law, one can bear the name of his town, country or tribe as long as it does not connote anything un-Islamic. There are also other names that individuals acquire as they grow, like "*Abu*," i.e., father of, or "*Umm*," mother of so and so.²⁶⁹

The primary purpose of giving names to babies is to thank God for His blessings and favor upon the parents, and to seek protection for them. During this joyous occasion, Islam recommends that parents who are financially capable slaughter a goat or a lamb for a female baby, and two goats or lambs for a male child. Muslim scholars have given no genuine reason for sacrificing two goats for a male child and one for a female child. As such, not all Muslim scholars agree on sacrificing two goats for a male. After all, sacrifice is optional. However, if the parents want, they can sacrifice one, two or more lambs for their babies. This depends on how many people are invited to the naming ceremony. This naming ceremony is known as "*aqiqat*."

In some places, particularly in West Africa, the naming ceremony is an elaborate event, and all members of the family are expected to attend. Nevertheless, some Muslims in Africa and elsewhere have turned this recommendation of sacrifice into an obligation. Some even borrow money to fulfill it. The naming ceremony "*aqiqat*" is a recommended act (*Sunnah*) and therefore its fulfillment should not be a burden on parents. Undoubtedly, a child can be named without this ceremony and without sacrificing anything. Also, the sacrifice may be postponed to another time if the parents want. Islamic law requires that the child be given a good name on the seventh day. On the naming day, the Prophet Muhammad recommends shaving the baby's head. While many Muslims adhere to this practice, some do not. Those who practice shaving consider it a symbolic change into a new world and a protection for the baby from evil. Those who don't adhere to it perceive it as unimportant, for it is a pre-Islamic tradition which was carried over to Islam.

²⁶⁷ Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1985), vol. 2:22.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 3:329 (English Edition).

²⁶⁹ Denny, p. 270.

Ways of performing the naming ceremony (*aqiqat*) vary from one country to another. In West Africa, the Imam officiates the ceremony by reading a sermon (*khutbah*) in the Arabic language. This sermon has three parts: (*tahmid*) glorifying Almighty God, asking blessing for Prophet Muhammad, and praying for the baby, his family, and for all Muslims in general. The Imam then makes *adhan* (the Islamic call to prayer) into the right ear of the baby, and *iqamah* (a call for performing the prayer) into his left ear.²⁷⁰ Muslims believe that the baby hears what is pronounced to him at this stage and hope that he will continue to hear it all his life. The Imam recites some verses from the *Qur'an* and some portion of the *Hadith*. Then he admonishes the parents about their responsibilities toward their baby. He then whispers the baby's name into his ears and announces the name to the audience. If the baby is not present for one reason or the other, the parents are instructed to make *adhan* and *iqamah* into his ears when they visit him and tell him his name.

A few Muslim scholars in West Africa allow adding native names or nicknames to an Islamic name provided the added names do not represent a non-Islamic identity. However, some Muslim scholars from West Africa object to the adding and using of native names or non-Islamic titles for political reasons. Shaykh Adam Abdullah of Ilorin, an historian and scholar from Nigeria, argues that using native nicknames often leads to neglecting the Islamic names, which are an identity. He insists that parents should call their children by their Muslim names rather than by nicknames or other titles.²⁷¹

In most other non-Arab countries, both Islamic and native names are given to children. And people have no problem with such usage until Christian missionaries, who are sometimes politically oriented in many Muslim countries (such as in Indonesia, Nigeria, etc), begin to use those names as political weapons to gain access to government funds and other opportunities based on the number of adherents to Christianity. As such, Christians consider anyone who bears a native name a non-Muslim and eventually a potential candidate for conversion; they also count that person against Muslims during the national census in those countries. This has led to much confusion and confrontation

during elections in some countries. Muslims and Christians constantly argue about who is the majority in Nigeria.

Finally, the naming ceremony is a joyful occasion where Muslims meet to affirm their social commitment and to welcome the new baby into the community through the sacrifice. This sacrifice, says Tayob, "provides an opportunity to spell out such a unity around a meal."²⁷² The naming ceremony in North America differs greatly from that in other countries. The tradition of sacrificing an animal on the seventh day after the birth of a child is not fully practiced in America. Occasionally, wealthy Muslims invite Muslims to the mosque and offer food for *aqiqat*. This is common among Arabs and Indo-Pakistani groups. Where there are ethnic mosques, such as the Albanian, Somalian, or Nigerian mosque, the leaders of these mosques perform the naming ceremony the way they perform it is done in their native countries.

Death and Dying: The Islamic Funeral

The first word whispered into a newborn baby's ears is the phrase: "*Allahu Akbar - God is Great.*" This same phrase is what will be pronounced on him/her when he/she has died during the funeral prayer – the farewell prayer, which is said on every deceased Muslim. Muslims not only share happiness with their brothers and sisters when good things happen to them, they also condole and express their sympathy during adversity, especially when people lose their loved ones. Muslims recognize that life on earth is temporal and every living thing shall die. Death marks the beginning of another life – the life in the grave – *Barezha*, according to Islamic belief. While life on earth has a time limit, life in the grave expands to the next world; nobody actually knows when it will occur except God.

Nonetheless, Muslims strongly believe, as affirmed in the *Qur'an*, that human beings will be resurrected from their graves; they will stand before their Lord for judgment for whatever they have done on earth. Those who pass the trial go to heaven and enter paradise, the eternal life. Those who did wrong when they were alive and never repented will fail and thus be condemned and punished. Prophet Muhammad gave a

270 Sabiq, vol. 3: 327.

271 Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Iluri, *Al-Islam wa Taqalid al-Jahiliyyah [Islam and Ignorant Practices]* (Agege, Lagos: Markaz Printing Press, n. d.), pp. 12-13.

272 Abdulkader Tayob, *Islam: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: One World Press, 1999), p. 46.

vivid description of what heaven and hell look like when he came back from his historical journey to heaven (*isra' a* and *miraj*), as believed by Muslims. (*Qur'an* 17:1; 53:3-18) Thus, Muhammad requests his followers to fervently seek refuge from the punishment of after life, to work hard and seek God's mercy in order to be saved.

Despite this scary picture of the next life, Muslims are required by the law to attend to the needs of the deceased. When a Muslim is on the verge of death, other Muslims should visit him, pray for him, instruct him to repeat the *Shahadah*, the phrase that there is no god but *Allah*, and that Muhammad is His messenger. The sick person is encouraged to ask for forgiveness for his sins and to write or dictate his will, the testament. Upon his death, he has the right to be given Islamic burial rites, *salat al-Janazah*. His death is announced to members of the community and to his immediate relatives. He who is informed about it is expected to repeat the phrase: "*Inna Lillah, wa Inna Ilayhi Raji' un-We are from God and to Him shall all return.*" Then the deceased's body is washed with soap. The washing is symbolic and spiritual. All the opening parts of the body like the mouth, nose, and private parts must be covered. Those who wash the deceased must use gloves and should purify themselves (*wudu* or *ghusl*) after and before they continue their daily routine work.

In most Muslim countries, immediate family members are charged with washing the deceased. Men wash men and women wash women. However, spouses can wash their partners. Funeral home services are uncommon in many Muslim countries. After a complete washing, the body is wrapped with white, inexpensive sheets. He can be wrapped in three or more layers of sheets. The deceased is then perfumed and put in a coffin and carried to the mosque or other place where other Muslims will pray for him. Local custom dictates whether or not women participate in the procession or in prayer over the dead body. Of course, Islamic law allows both men and women to offer prayer for the deceased. The funeral prayer is often performed at the mosque or in front of the home of the deceased, and sometimes in an enclosure. Nowadays, some prayers are performed in funeral homes in America and Canada, a custom that is foreign to Islam and strange to Muslims. American funeral homes are not a good setting for prayer and only a few people will attend such a prayer. The deceased needs such a prayer at that very particular time.

At the prayer place, which is usually at the mosque, the deceased is put in a position with the face towards the direction of the *qiblat*. The Imam stands beside the chest of the dead in case of a man, and at the middle, in the case of a woman. Other members stand in rows behind the Imam and follow him in whatever he does. The prayer lasts for about five to ten minutes during which the Imam says "*Allahu Akbar- God is Great,*" four times. After the first *takbir*, he recites the opening chapter of the *Qur'an*, *al-Fatihah*; after the second, he reads *salat al-Ibrahimiyyah*; after the third, he prays for the deceased and for all Muslims who have died. After the fourth *takbir*, he prays for all Muslims in general. He then concludes by saying: "*as-salaam alaykum warahmatullah* - peace and blessing of *Allah* be upon you all" to the right side, and if he wants, to the left too. His followers do the same and then disperse. With that, the funeral ritual prayer is completed. The Prophet Muhammad recommends participation in funeral prayer. It is not obligatory. Any numbers of Muslims who participate in the prayer represent other Muslims. But it is a duty that some Muslims attend the prayer, otherwise, they will all be considered sinners for not honoring their deceased member.

The bier, which must be made of inexpensive wood, is carried by hand or car to the cemetery. Islam permits that a deceased may be buried during the day as well as at night. Some of the companions of the Prophet were buried at night. Islam encourages Muslims to pray and escort the deceased to the graveyard, even if they do not know him. When following and carrying him to the grave, they are expected to be totally silent. They can only engage in remembrance of God in their hearts and bring to mind that one day, they too will be carried to the grave. When a coffin passes by, Muslims are expected to stand up out of respect for the dead, regardless of whether the deceased was a Muslim or not. At the graveyard, they lay him down with his face towards the *qiblat*, the direction of Mecca. The shroud is loosened and the body is put in the ground without the casket. They fill the grave with sand and pray for him. The grave can be marked in a simple way so as to be known. However, Islam discourages building and writing on the grave, hanging pictures or erecting statues of the deceased. A Muslim is remembered through his good deeds, not through his pictures, Muslim theologians argue.

Muslims believe that after everyone has left the graveyard, two angels, *Munkar* and *Nakir* attend to the deceased and ask him a few questions: about his Lord, his prophet, and his religion. If he answers positively that *Allah* is his Lord, Muhammad is his Prophet, and that Islam is his religion, he is blessed and relieved of the torment of the grave. If he fails to answer correctly and babbles, the angels will punish him. It is on this belief that Muslim theologians affirm that the enjoyment or punishment in the next world begins from the grave. That is, the deceased begins to experience either of the two: enjoyment or punishment. Muslim scholars concur that both the body and the soul of the deceased will experience reward or punishment, regardless of whether the body is buried, burned or eaten by animal or fish upon drowning.²⁷³ The relatives return home and the deceased is left with his deeds. According to Islamic tradition, three things follow a deceased to the grave: his relatives and friends, his wealth, and his deeds. His relatives and friends return home, his wealth cannot be buried with him, for it is not beneficial to him anymore, and it is only his deeds that stay with him.

Islam strongly disapproves of cremation of the body. The human body is sacred and must be accorded great respect both during a person's life and after. If the family of the deceased has no money to bury their beloved due to the high expenses of burial, such as in Hawaii, the Muslim community must help and bear such expense. It should also be pointed out that Muslims bury their deceased as soon as possible. The deceased should be buried within twenty-four to seventy two hours, and all his debt must be paid or arrangement made for payment before the burial. Islam does not disapprove of autopsy if there is a need for it. No autopsy is allowed except by legal decision from the court if the deceased has been killed by murder or poison. Islam does not endorse embalming because the body must be buried and returned to the earth as soon as possible. "From the earth did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again." (*Qur'an* 20:55)

Muslims mourn their deceased by attending to the needs of the family who are affected. They visit them, cook for them and express

sympathy for them.²⁷⁴ Extreme mourning by tearing one's clothes, rolling on the floor or expressing ungrateful remarks is forbidden. If the husband dies, the wife waits for four months and ten days before she remarries, or until she delivers, if she is pregnant. This is known as *iddah* (a waiting period). It is a time to determine whether the widow is pregnant or not. Even though the law does not require men to wait for any specific period before remarrying, Muslim men often wait for a period of time before they remarry, if they actually remarry. It is also not necessary that the widow marry within the family of her husband. After the waiting period, she is free to remarry whomever she wants. There is no obligation on her to stay with the family of her husband. If the deceased left any property, it should be distributed according to the Islamic law of inheritance. In the Islamic law of inheritance, the entitlement of each heir is detailed as well as the terms and conditions of distribution. If she has children, she is entitled to one eighth of her husband's property or one quarter if she has no children and the husband has no children either.

The Social Responsibility of Building the Society

Muslims present Islam as a universal religion and thus claim that their duty is to mission it to others.

You are the best of people, evolved for (the service of) human beings. You enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong and believe in *Allah*." (*Qur'an* 3:110). Let there arise among you (O Muslims) a band (of people) inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity.' (*Qur'an* 3:104).

The philosophy behind Islamic mission focuses on the notion of extending what they believe to be truth to others. As they want success for themselves in this life and the next, they must wish success for

273 Sabiq, vol. 4: 90-93 (English edition).

274 For more information, see C.J. Johnson and Marsha G. McGee, ed., *How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife* (Philadelphia: The Charles Press, 1998), pp. 135-137.

others. This compassionate attitude leads them to invite others to Islam without compulsion. Wherever they are, they spread their religion; when they grow in number, they build their own mosques and institutions where Islamic values are taught.

Muslims pay great attention to the establishment of the Muslim community from whence their social activities begin. At present, Muslims all over the world and particularly in the West have contributed tremendously to the establishment of Islamic institutions that cater to the needs of their members. They build many mosques, which are not only places of worship but centers of social, religious and political activities. They build schools to inculcate Islamic values in their children. They establish clinics and hospitals to meet the medical needs of their members. They also offer and conduct various social programs that cater to various needs of each group in society, such as day care facilities for children, adult educational programs, vocational training centers, nursing homes for elderly Muslims, and orphanages for the poor and bereft. They also establish Muslim cemeteries. In order to accomplish all of the above, many organizations are formed and each group takes care of one particular area of service to the community. There are hundreds of youth groups, charitable organizations, social clubs and welfare and social agencies that attend to and serve Muslims and non-Muslims as well in all aspects of life.

Further, as far as social integration and relationship to other members of society is concerned, Islam outlines how a Muslim should relate to his neighbors, talk to strangers, attend to visitors and guests, and participate with others in dialogue and in constructive building of society and humanity as well. A Muslim perceives himself as a member of a community not as a separate individual, whose right overrides the rights of the society. In the Islamic concept, the rights of society override the rights of individual. Thus, the maxim "I am because we are" adequately describes the relationship of individuals to society. The Western notion of individuality, whereby every person claims unlimited rights and does with his life whatever he wants, is not totally embraced in Islam. A Muslim has many duties to discharge toward himself and others. But what constitutes a right or wrong act is generally defined by God and Prophet Muhammad as expressed in Islamic law books. Therefore, humans have freedom to choose within what has been

approved by God. Of course, there are certain exceptions and there is a lot of room for interpretations of what God wants Muslims to do and which command can be applied. A Muslim possesses no unlimited, unchecked freedom like his counterpart in the West. A Muslim is one who surrenders his will to the will of God and functions within the boundary set by God and His Prophet Muhammad.

Summary

Islam does not divide human life into the profane and the spiritual. Every element in a Muslim's life has a religious significance. A committed Muslim begins his day by answering the call to prayer, where he communicates with his Lord, seeks His support and also meets his brothers and sisters. After the prayer, if he so wishes, he stays and learns about his religion, or he disperses on earth and seeks his livelihood. In his quest to live a better life, he interacts with fellow Muslims and others on daily basis. Whenever the time of prayer comes, he stops everything he is doing and performs it. At the end of the week, he joins others in Friday congregational prayer. Thus, he remains constantly in touch with his Lord and with his community. His relationship with fellow Muslims nourishes him as he participates in and contributes to his community by sharing in their happiness and sympathizing with them when they are afflicted with adversity.

At the end of the month of *Ramadan*, he celebrates with other Muslims the fast-breaking feast, *Eid al-Fitr*, the most celebrated festival in Islam. If he has been blessed by God, he journeys to Mecca to perform a pilgrimage—*hajj*. There, he and millions of other Muslims around the world meet, worship God and reenact the rites initiated by Prophet Abraham. Certainly, Islamic pilgrimage marks the universal annual gathering of Muslims in Mecca. Therein all social status and racial discrimination is suspended. Everyone puts on the same robe (*ihram*), except women; they wear whatever they want. They all stand before Almighty God with total submission and humility. This universal gathering provides ample chance to get to know one another. Such interaction strengthens the Muslim bond as one nation (*ummah*) and serves as a unique opportunity for participants to develop mutual understanding and foster cooperation in all spheres of life.

While *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha* are the major festivals in Islam, many Muslims also celebrate the *Mawlid*, the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, the naming ceremony, marriage, and the completion of the memorization of the *Qur'an* (*khatm*). Of course, some orthodox Muslim scholars object to the celebration of the *Mawlid*, arguing that it is an innovation (*bid'a*) and an imitation of non-Muslims. Nevertheless, many Muslims all over the world ardently celebrate Muhammad's birthday, and claim that such celebration is an expression of their thankfulness to God, who sent them such a great prophet. Undoubtedly, wherever the *Mawlid* is celebrated, it is jubilant. It attracts thousands of Muslims, particularly in Egypt, North and West Africa, and in South East Asia. Functionally, it allows different groups of Muslims to meet and learn more about Muhammad and his message, and the role he played in Muslim daily life. Such celebration fosters unity among them and motivates them towards more cooperation and commitment to their faith.

The naming ceremony is another occasion whereby the parents and their relatives welcome the newborn baby into the world and into the Muslim community. Parents select beautiful and meaningful names for their children. And the Imam whispers the *adhan* (the call to prayer) into the ears of the baby, hoping that he will hear such expression throughout his life. The naming ceremony often concludes with the slaughtering of an animal and a feast. It is a sort of reunion for members of the community.

Another celebration that also brings different people together is the marriage ceremony. The attendees include Muslims, non-Muslims, relatives of families, friends, and co-workers. The goal of the marriage ceremony is on keeping members of the public informed that the couple is joined together in a legal relationship; that the attendees are witness. The husband should remain faithful to his wife for he has become a responsible person whose duties lie in taking care of his wife and children. The wife too is expected to take care of her husband and her children. Normally, a big feast is prepared during the marriage ceremony since many people are usually invited; even those with no invitation attend the ceremony. Islamic marriage, it should be pointed out, is a relationship between two families rather than just between husband and wife. And since it is a contract, whatever both parties

want can be stated in it, including a woman's choice that her husband not marry another wife. Whenever both parties sign the contract, it becomes a legal document and is binding on both.

People do not only assemble for joyful occasions; they also gather in bad times or when calamity strikes. They assemble to console one another when bad things befall a member of their family. One such dreadful occasion and unwanted gathering is the funeral. Although the funeral ceremony has never been a time of happiness for the afflicted family, it is a period when Muslims actually express their heartfelt sympathy and support for the bereaved. In Islam, the bereft family is taken care of by immediate family members or by the Muslim community.

People in different countries include different elements in the burial ceremony, but most of these are frowned upon as they are not Islamic. For instance, the ceremonies or the special prayer on the 7th, the 40th and the one year revival ceremony after the death of the deceased are not Islamic. They are innovations wrongly introduced into Islam through the absorption in a particular culture. Orthodox Muslim scholars condemn these practices because they lack scriptural support and because the companions of the Prophet and the early Muslim pioneers did not practice them. Therefore, Muslim theologians urge that adherents of Islam should not engage in such practices for they are deviations from true Islam.

Finally, learning at the mosque provides a healthy atmosphere for interaction among Muslims. Learning about Islam often starts at the mosque and is conducted immediately after the congregation prayers. The students who attend are those who show keen interest in learning. Teachers at the mosque generally are unpaid, either by the government or by their students, except on rare occasions. The primary objective of learning is to know about God through the study of the *Qur'an*, the Islamic scripture, the study of the *Sunnah*, the traditions of Prophet Muhammad, and to become better human beings through learning moral values. True knowledge, Muslims believe, is that which is accompanied by action and yields good result. Otherwise, one should not waste time in acquiring it.

Unlike their Western neighbors, the Moslems were able to achieve a pleasant balance between the real and the

ideal, the natural and the supernatural, the temporal and the eternal, the scientific and the theological. ...It is true that Muslims were willing to memorize their Koran and accept the tenets of their faith, quite readily, but they left the doors of their minds and laboratories open to the study of mathematics, medicine, chemistry, astronomy, geography, and other academic area. The aim of Islamic education, then, included a balancing of the spiritual, esthetic, and empirical. Islamic education had breadth and depth, continuity and flexibility. It provided for transmission of its heritage but did not rule out practical and functional concerns.²⁷⁵

In Islamic education, the relationship between teacher and student must be cordial. The teacher is expected to treat his students kindly, as he would his children. He must be honest with them, exhort and advise them when they do wrong. He is expected to practice what he teaches in terms of values and ethics lest his deeds belie his words. On the other hand, students must show respect for their teachers and recognize their ceaseless dedication. Both students and teachers should perceive themselves as partners in active learning so that both can greatly benefit from one another. Muslims realize that education is a slow, patient process with few short cuts; it takes time to learn. Hence, both teachers and students are admonished to be patient to master their disciplines. Education in Islam is to know God and learn how to be a practical Muslim and excellent human being in society.

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²⁷⁵ Gross, p. 142.

Chapter X

Islam and Morals

Introduction

Islam is predicated on the idea that human beings are by their nature inherently good. They are born naturally free of any sin. Since God loves them, He sends them many messengers to guide them to the right path. If humans are left on their own without guidance, many of them will deviate from the right path. Thus, from time to time, God sends prophets to enlighten and remind them about their duties toward Him and toward their fellow human beings. Islam provided basic knowledge to humans about God and gave them instruction on how Muslims should live their lives. And from the beginning of creation, God endowed human beings with reasoning faculties to choose between what is good and what is bad. Humans' ability to choose distinguishes them from all other creatures on earth. God gave them freedom to obey Him or not to obey Him. He never forces His will on them, as is exemplified in the story of Adam and Eve in the *Qur'an* 2:30-38. It is on the basis of this freedom and how it is exercised during one's lifetime that human beings will be judged according to their deeds on the Day of Judgment.

Even though the *Qur'an* cannot be considered a textbook on morals, nevertheless, it contains numerous verses that deal with moral issues and sets forth the pattern of life that Muslims are expected to live as vicegerents of God on earth. Fazlu Rahman has stated that the *Qur'an* is not a book of abstract ethics, but neither is it the legal document that Muslim lawyers (*fuqaha'*) have made it out to be. Much of the *Qur'an*,

which deals with human relations (and which also includes many of the stories), is full of statements on the necessity of justice, fairness, goodness, kindness, forgiveness, guidance against moral peril (*adl, qist, ihsan, taqwa*) and so on.

While it is true that Muslims during the 3rd and 4th centuries of Islam borrowed from other religious traditions and cultures, the moral injunctions, which are detailed and analyzed in the Prophetic traditions of Muhammad, serve as the core foundation of Islamic ethics. Certainly, Muslim scholars later developed theories around these basics; however, the main objective of Islamic morality is to mold Muslim character so that they recognize the unity of God by admitting Him as the Creator who alone deserves to be worshipped. Muslims are commanded in the *Qur'an* to submit to Him and obey Him in whatever He decrees, because He is their Creator and He knows what is best for them. And since Muslims pride themselves on being submitters to God, they find fulfillment in obeying His commands.

Muslim morality rests on the principle of commanding the good, forbidding the evil, doing no harm to oneself or to others, loving oneself, wishing for others what one wishes for oneself, and being conscious of God at all times. Islam holds Muslims responsible and accountable for whatever they do on earth. They receive reward for their good deeds and punishment for their evil deeds and sins if they fail to repent for their mistakes.

The idea of Islamic morality stems from the concept of personhood. But who determines who a person is? What does he owe to himself and to others? How does he want to be treated and how should he treat others? What is his relationship to his Creator and the relationship of the Creator to him? Since Islam comes to guide humans to the right path, it instructs individuals on how to treat themselves and others. Thus, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* elaborate, in general terms, what the duties of believers are and what rights can they claim from others.²⁷⁶

276 Some of the verses which address the duties and rights of individuals in the *Qur'an* include: *Qur'an* 3:104, 110, 114; 4:114; 7:157; 9:67, 71; 9:112; 5:79; 22:41; 31:17.

Morality Before the Advent of Islam in Arabia

When Muhammad emerged in Arabia in the 7th century and introduced Islam, the Arab world was experiencing widespread moral decadence. While the Arabs were known to be brave and generous, they were also inclined toward killing one another and retaliating against their enemies at any opportune time. They occasionally buried their female daughters alive, either for fear of poverty or for fear of shame that having daughters might bring to the tribe or the family. Thus, one of Muhammad's primary goals was to unite the Arabs, reform them, and mold their characters in line with Islamic values, which he claimed are superior. Muhammad did not change everything; neither did he endorse all he saw among the Arabs. Rather, he approved of what was good, such as the Arab customs involved in hospitality. He modified certain things and prohibited other behaviors he found particularly offensive to society, such as female infanticide and drinking wine. In Mecca, he called upon his tribe the Quraysh to do good deeds and shun evil practices. He defined "the good" as that which the religion of Islam approves and "evil" as that which God condemns. To Muhammad, real good is the recognition of one God as the Lord, who deserves to be worshipped exclusively; for He is the Creator. An evil act, Muhammad insisted, is to associate anything with or equate anything to God and do harm to oneself or to other creatures. If God can be accepted as the one and only One and the Lawgiver as delineated by Muhammad, then compliance with His rules is easy.

As Muhammad continued to preach Islam in Mecca, he also continued to explain to his followers what is right and thus acceptable, and what is wrong and thus objectionable. A few followers admired Muhammad's preaching while the Meccan oligarchy saw his new ideas a threat to their establishment and businesses. They criticized him bitterly, fought him openly, and attempted to assassinate him. Secretly, he escaped to Medina, where he found fertile soil upon which to plant the seeds of his religion. The people of Medina admired his ideas, accepted his moral values, and molded their lives according to his teachings. They became the custodians of the new religion and its ambassadors to others. They found in Muhammad a model human being whose behaviors they were proud to emulate in all aspects of

their lives: in beliefs, dressing, eating, in their relationship with their families, friends, neighbors, guests, and enemies.

All Muhammad's teachings about Islamic values and morals can be summarized in two phrases: commanding the right and forbidding the wrong. These are the core principles of Islamic morality. Although Muhammad emphasized duty, he did not ignore people's rights. Duties are what Muslims owe to others and rights are what they expect from them. If everyone discharges his or her duties toward others, society will be better off, Muslims argue. And since no human life is free from adversity, everyone needs one another at different times for different purposes. The important goal of Islamic morality is to make sure that justice prevails and that people live peacefully with one another.

The Source of Morality

Islam does not recognize any source of law other than the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, and whatever is derived from them directly or indirectly. Thus, human reasoning (*aql*) is not considered the only legitimate source of law or ethics in Islam. Muslim scholars are ambivalent about reliance on human reasoning alone in determining what is right or wrong. They believe that human reasoning (*aql*) cannot always guarantee justice and equity for members of society. This is because the way human beings think when making decisions differs from one person to another. What one may accept as reasonable may not appear as reasonable to another. What one group of people recognize as sensible may not be sensible to another. Since right or wrong is mostly determined by societal convention, it is ludicrous to rely on human reasoning alone to be the final source of legislating right and wrong. Therefore, as far as Islam is concerned, the intellect cannot be fully relied upon as the only source of legislation. Mostly, everyone or each group looks out for its own interests with little regard, if any, for the interests of the poor and low-class members of society. The end result of any law based on human intellect is that it constantly changes as the interests of its legislators change. What seems to be lawful and valid today may become unlawful tomorrow. What is unlawful today becomes lawful tomorrow, such as in the case of capital punishment in the U.S. Some states endorse capital punishment and others reject it.

However, there are some states nowadays that endorsed and practiced it in the past but are now thinking of repealing their capital punishment laws due to pressure from its opponents on the issue. Also, slavery was practiced and accepted in the past but later condemned and outlawed in the West in 1807.²⁷⁷

What is at Stake?

The core principle of Islamic morality is to enjoin good deeds and condemn evils of all types. But what is "good" and what is "bad"? Who defines them? How can good and bad be known? Is human intellect intrinsically capable of recognizing good and bad? Should good deeds be rewarded and bad deeds punished and, if so, on what ground? Who gives the reward and who inflicts punishment on evildoers? Who carries out the responsibility of enjoining good deeds and condemning evil deeds? These are few questions to which Muslim scholars and jurists have given great attention.

We will discuss here in general terms Muslim ideas about the concept of right and wrong and how they can be known. Why does Islam request its followers to do good deeds and refrain from evil deeds? We'll also discuss why reward and punishment are attached to human actions and the consequences of this attachment. We will analyze how Muslims discharge their duties to others and how they claim their rights from others. Again, Muslims derive their ethics and moral values from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. Although early Muslims may have borrowed some ethical ideas from other civilizations, the basics of Islamic moral teachings are rooted in the *Qur'an* and in Islam itself.

Who Defines What Is "Right" and What Is "Wrong"?

Muslim scholars agree that the Lawgiver in Islam is Almighty God. He is the Legislator and human beings are the executors of His laws. They believe that God sent different messengers to instruct humans about how to know Him and how they can live peacefully among themselves. These messengers informed believers about what is good and what is wrong as revealed to them. Where God is silent about an

issue, the messengers supplied the answers, for they claimed to be God's spokespersons on earth. To Muslims, the basic laws that govern everyday life are established by God in the *Qur'an*, explained by Muhammad in the *Sunnah*, and interpreted by Muslim jurists in *Shari'ah* books. Muslim scholars (*mujtahidun*) are not actually enacting laws, rather they are making the laws of God known to the people and explaining to them how those laws can be applied. They exert their efforts toward interpreting the laws for believers. For Muslim scholars, the law of God (*al-Hukm*) has been defined as the word of God that pertains to the actions of responsible persons (*mukalaffin*).

However, when the Prophet or any Muslim legal authority commands something, nothing is necessary by their command, but by the command of God. God requests that believers obey His Prophet and those who are in positions of authority among them (*Qur'an* 4:59). Muslim scholars debate how the laws of God can be recognized where there is no revelation. Is human intellect capable of recognizing what is right or wrong by itself without revelation? Muslim jurists agree that where there is revelation pertaining to a particular issue, the intellect can help human beings to better understand the law and implement it. It can also assist humans to recognize the purposes and aims of the law, but it can only be relied upon for legislation where the text or revelation is silent about an issue.

As to whether human intellect can define and determine what is right or wrong, there are different opinions. The Mu'tazilite (the Rationalists), argue that human intellect can recognize the goodness and badness of human actions without God's revelation. To them, God reveals moral law to human beings and prescribes obedience to it because such moral law is intrinsically good. And if God condemns something, it is because it is intrinsically bad. Hence, God commands a good deed because it is beneficial to human beings and condemns an evil act because it is intrinsically harmful to them. Therefore, in their opinion, God will never command evil acts and will not condemn good deeds. The Mu'tazilite argue that human beings by their nature can recognize that lying is wrong and that truthfulness is good. It is on this basis that human beings will receive reward or punishment, regardless of whether a revelation is sent to them from God or not. "If the doer of an action incurs reward or blame then the act must be intrinsically

²⁷⁷ Physical slavery is over and eradicated in the world but mental slavery remains all over the world in one form or another.

good or bad, else the justice of God is undermined," argued 'Abd al-Jabbar, one of the leading Mu'tazilite scholars.²⁷⁸

To the Mu'tazilite, actions are of three types:

- a) actions that are good in and of themselves and therefore God commands their commission;
- b) actions that are bad in and of themselves and God must not command them, because they are repugnant to human nature;
- c) actions that are between good and bad and God may command them or forbid them.

If He commands them, then they are good, and if He condemns them, then they are bad. Thus, human intellect, informs them to do good and shun what is wrong even if there is no revelation. Under this understanding, human intellect is capable of recognizing the virtue of truthfulness and the harmfulness of cheating. On that basis, each person is responsible for his actions and will be rewarded or punished for them.²⁷⁹ In other words, good and evil are independent of God's command. God only commands good for its purposeful end and condemns evil for its intrinsic evil. If He were to command evil, there would be no meaning for the justice of God. For why would He command evil and punish its doer, the Mu'tazilite asked?

On the other hand, the Ash'arite (the Voluntarists), argue that good and bad can only be known through revelation. Good deeds, they argue, are good because God commands them; bad deeds are bad because God forbids them. Actions are not in and of themselves good or bad but become good or bad through the will of God. Human intellect (unaided by revelation) on its own cannot truly recognize the good or evil of an act on all occasions. It cannot make any action lawful or unlawful. Therefore, God defines good and evil, lawful and unlawful acts. Al-Shahrastani (d.1153), the 11th century Muslim theologian, argues that:

278 Daniel Brown, 'Islamic Ethics in Comparative Perspective,' in *Muslim World*, v. 89 no. 2 (April 1999): 181-192.

279 Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Usul al-Fiqh* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, n. d.), pp. 71-72.

Upon God, nothing is rationally incumbent, neither the good nor the bad (better), or even grace (*lutf*). For whatsoever is stipulated by reason as a matter of necessitating wisdom, can be counted by its contrary from a different standpoint.²⁸⁰

The point of contention is, if human intellect can recognize what is right or wrong, are human beings obliged to do the right thing or compelled to refrain from evil deeds? Is there any reward or punishment attached to these two outside of receiving revelation from God? What would be the consequence of failing to do the right thing and insistence upon doing the wrong?

Without going into the details of Muslim theologians' long debate on the above questions, it is pertinent to mention the generally accepted opinion of Sunni Muslims. Sunnis believe that God creates human beings; He informs them about what is good and what is evil. Good and evil, they assert, can only be known through revelation, the *Qur'an*, as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. He who obeys what God wants will be rewarded through His mercy, and he who disobeys Him and follows his own whims will be punished through His justice. Of course, he may be forgiven through His mercy if the evil doer repents. Human actions are not intrinsically good or bad in themselves. Certainly, what one group of people considers unlawful and evil may be regarded as lawful and an act of worship by others. A good example of this is the slaughtering of animals such as cows, sheep, chicken, or fish for eating. Hindus and Buddhists label such slaughtering unethical and inhumane because it entails inflicting of pain on those animals. However, Jews, Christians and Muslims do not consider the slaughtering of animals an evil practice. Rather, it is an act of worship according to the *Qur'an* and a blessing from God, who made these animals subservient to humans for food and for the survival of the human race. Therefore, to Muslims, actions are neither good nor bad in and of themselves but become good or bad according to the command of God. This is not to say that intellect or reason has no place in Islam. Certainly, it plays a great role in analyzing, interpreting, comprehending and implementing the message itself. Human reason is complementary to revelation.

280 Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1991), p. 48, quoting *al-Milal* by Al-Shahrastani, vol. 1: 102.

The Mu'tazilite claim that goodness and badness, being essential characteristics of action, can be rationally known is rejected by the Ash'arite on the grounds that the presumption of intuitive certainty in the apprehension of good and evil is contradicted by the disagreement of vast numbers of people on the allegedly certain maxims of morality. Moreover, many actions deemed necessarily bad by the Mu'tazilite, such as unrequited suffering, are attributed to God and consequently regarded as positively good; accordingly, the goodness of such actions cannot be an intrinsic quality intuitively and indubitably known through the faculty of reason. Further, Sunni Muslims believe, according to the *Qur'an*, that God has sent messengers to people at different times. Those messengers and prophets spoke about the existence of God. Thus, no nation can claim lack of knowledge about God and His laws or what He wants from them. Consequently, they are answerable to God when they do good or bad, for they have knowledge of what is right or wrong as conveyed to them by their messengers.

The actions of Muslims, who are perceived as responsible agents (*mukalaffin*), are divided by al-Baghdadi (d. 1037) into five categories:

- 1) actions that are obligatory (*wajib* or *Fard* or *halal*);
- 2) actions that are prohibited and should never be done (*haram* or *mahzur*);
- 3) actions that are promulgated or recommended (*masnun* or *mundub*);
- 4) actions that are bad (*makruh*); and
- 5) actions that are permissible or indifferent (*mubah*).

- a) An obligatory act is that which God has commanded as a matter of necessity in such a way that its omission amounts to a sin deserving punishment. Its commission is a virtue deserving reward when done intentionally and sincerely.
- b) A prohibited act (*haram*) is that which God has forbidden in such a way that its perpetration is likewise deserving of punishment. Its omission deserves reward.
- c) A promulgated act (*masnun* or *mandub*) is an intermediate position; whomever performs it will be rewarded, but those who omit it will not be punished.

d) A bad action (*makruh*) is that whose omission is rewarded, whereas its perpetration is left unpunished.

e) A permissible act (*mubah*) is that which does not lead to reward or punishment. One is free to do whatever he likes in this regard.

The Basis of Morality in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*

Although the *Qur'an* cannot be considered a textbook on ethics, it contains numerous verses that deal with the principles of ethics. It also lays down certain precepts that govern how a Muslim conducts himself in his daily life, be it his relationship with God, with himself, or with others. The *Qur'an* begins by emphasizing that God creates human beings and watches over them. He sees and hears them and therefore, as the Creator, He alone deserves to be worshipped. The *Qur'an* also outlines the principles of human relationship to God, thus the emphasis on believers' duties to Him. If they properly render their duties, they are promised abundant reward, which is an incentive for them to do more good deeds. In general, the *Qur'an* admonishes Muslims to do good and avoid evil (*al-amr bil Ma'ruf wa nahy anil Munkar*). Practicing good deeds amounts to being honest, humble, moderate, kind and generous to the poor and the orphaned. It is pertinent to mention here that what are considered to be human's duties to God are in reality duties to fellow human beings, the community and society. And since the community does not give rewards for the performance of these duties, it is God who compensates those who fulfill them; hence, they are labeled God's duties.

Those who believe and do deeds of righteousness and establish regular prayers and regular charity will have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (*Qur'an* 2:277)

Further, the moral teachings of the *Qur'an* in the early stage of Islam in Mecca are contained in three codes as suggested by Donaldson in his work *Studies in Islamic Ethics*. The first code, he states, is in the *Qur'an* 17:23-40. The commands in this code include, according

to Donaldson, four positive commands and seven prohibitions. The positive commandments are:

- 1) to know God as the one and only Creator (*Qur'an* 17:23);
- 2) to be kind to one's parents and pray for them (*Qur'an* 17:24-28);
- 3) to give to the poor and be kind to them (*Qur'an* 17:29-30); and
- 4) to be moderate in spending, showing neither extravagance nor misery. (*Qur'an* 17: 31-32)

The things that are prohibited are:

- 1) the killing of female daughters for fear of poverty (infanticide) (*Qur'an* 17:33);
- 2) adultery (*Qur'an* 17:34);
- 3) killing others unjustly (*Qur'an* 17:35);
- 4) robbing orphans of their due rights (*Qur'an* 17:36);
- 5) cheating in trade and of any kind (*Qur'an* 17:37);
- 6) believing false reports (lies) (*Qur'an* 17:38); and
- 7) being prideful (*Qur'an* 17:39-40).

The second code in *Qur'an* 25:64-74 explains the virtue and moral qualities that must be found in or expected of the practical Muslim. This code elaborates the rewards that await those who practice these values. As Donaldson analyzes, the reference in these verses is to those who are lowly (*Qur'an* 25:64-66), to the discriminating (*Qur'an* 25:67-70), whether about spending or killing or personal chastity; to the penitent (*Qur'an* 25:71), and to the truthful (*Qur'an* 25:72-74).²⁸¹

The third code is found in *Qur'an* 31:11-17. Its admonitions, Donaldson states, are to have gratitude to God, to associate no other with God, to discharge duties to one's parents, to remember that God brings everything to light, to ask God to be steadfast, reasonable, and patient, and to live so as to avoid pride and ignorance. (*Qur'an* 31:17). In addition, there are other moral precepts in the *Qur'an* which Prophet Muhammad preached in Mecca such as assisting fellow countrymen in need, avoiding all forms of cheating, being chaste in their lives, and not burying newborn babies alive for fear of poverty. Looking into the

281 Dwight Donaldson, *Studies in Muslim Ethics* (London: S. P. C. K., 1958), p. 25.

above verses, it appears that the pattern of moral life which the *Qur'an* says a Muslim must live by has been mapped out for him. Abdalati in his work *Islam in Focus* eloquently expresses what Muslims are expected to do and how to behave.

The Muslim has to guard his external behavior and his manifest deeds, his words and his thoughts, his feelings, and intentions. In a general sense, his role is to champion what is right and fight what is wrong, seek what is true and abandon what is false, cherish what is beautiful and wholesome and avoid what is indecent. True and virtue are his goal. Humbleness and simplicity, courtesy and compassion are his second nature. To him, arrogance and vanity, harshness and indifference are distasteful, offensive, and displeasing to God.²⁸²

Muslim's Duties to God

The Muslim's duties to God include rendering worship to Him alone without associating anything with Him, loving Him more than anything else, and being aware of Him in whatever they are doing. This awareness implies that one does what pleases God and avoids what may cause His displeasure. Muslims are commanded to respect God's laws by obeying them and refraining from what He declares unlawful. A Muslim should also express his thankfulness to God for the gift of life, guidance to the right path, and for His blessings and protection. All these are meant to keep the Muslim's relationship with God strong.

Duties to the Prophet

Muslims also have duties to the Prophet Muhammad. He has to be accepted as the last messenger of God, the message he brought must be recognized as the truth, and that he embodied the message in his practical life. Muslims should recognize Muhammad as their role

282 Hammudah Abdalati, *The Family Structure in Islam* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publication, 1977), p. 40.

model and emulate him. Prophet Muhammad asserted that he had been sent to perfect moral behavior. Muslims, in whatever they do, seek the guidance of God and emulate the ways of Prophet Muhammad. "Certainly, you have had in the messenger of God a good example to follow for him who seeks God or hopes for (the meeting with God) and the last day, and remembers God much." (*Qur'an* 33:21). The love of the Prophet Muhammad is as important to the Muslim as the love of God. Muslims are expected to obey him without demur and be absolutely loyal to him. Failure to do so renders their faith and deeds incomplete and unacceptable.

Duties to Oneself

With regard to individuals, Muslims have duties to render to their own selves. The major duties to one's self include achieving balance and healthy development of human knowledge in all facets. A Muslim has a great duty to learn and continue to increase his knowledge until his death. There is a saying attributed to Muhammad emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge from birth to death. When a person is young, his parents should teach him the *Qur'an*; when he matures, he seeks knowledge by himself with ceaseless effort and endeavors to rise to higher levels of knowledge. While knowledge about God, the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* ranks high, knowledge of other disciplines is greatly encouraged as long as it is acquired to serve oneself and the community and do not cause any harm, directly or indirectly, to other human beings. Muslims believe that the acquisition of knowledge is a sublime and spiritual pursuit; that attaining proper knowledge forms one of the most basic requirements of the proper moral life. Through it, truth will be served.

It is also a duty on oneself to try to achieve perfection in whatever one does: in action, talk, dressing, communicating, etc. The Prophet advised that whenever a Muslim executes a task, he should execute it with thorough skill and perfection. Striving for excellence is a required duty. In addition, one has a moral duty not to harm oneself by any means. Thus, hurting one's self, such as committing suicide or exposing oneself to danger intentionally is prohibited. Muslims consider human life a gift from God; one has no right to take one's life or harm it under

any circumstances. This is self-preservation, which is one of the purposes of law in Islam. Muslims are expected to refrain from lying, deception, bearing false witness against innocent people and concealing the truth for personal interests. These are condemned because they reflect a form of deception. Also, exultation in one's successes and haughtiness have been disapproved because they breed pride and cause jealousy, which may lead to the ruin of one's character.

On the other hand, it is a duty upon a Muslim to love and protect himself from all evils. A person who does not love himself cannot love others. When he attains success in life, he thanks God; when a misfortune or adversity befalls him, he is patient and asks God for relief and support. His hope in the Mercy of God is incessant and should never fail through fear or despair.

O ye who believe, persevere, and excel in perseverance, and be always in a state of readiness, and observe your duty to God that haply you may prosper. (*Qur'an* 3:200)

Islam makes it an obligation on every Muslim to earn his/her livelihood from lawful sources. Thus, begging and gambling—earning wealth without labor—is strongly condemned. Instead, Islam encourages hard work to feed oneself and one's family.

Duty to Fellow Human Beings

There are certain obligations that are due to others; they are of different kinds. They include abstaining from all evils against fellow human beings regardless of their color, race, or status. These duties are rendered to others because they are also human beings. Not all Muslims comply with these duties. However, they know what their responsibilities are and have not been left in darkness as to what they should or should not do. Some of the general duties to others are not to spread mischief and injustice on earth under any pretext of civilizing them or saving them from evil. God forbids Muslims from evil acts: lewdness, wickedness, and infringement upon the rights of others (*Qur'an* 16:90). Islam strongly condemns oppression in any form and breaking the bonds that tie people together. Humans should not kill

one another for it is a violation of their right to life. God says in the *Qur'an* 17:33,

And take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand redress through law or to forgive); but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life, for he is helped by the law.

If anyone kills a human being, unless it for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it shall be as if he killed all human beings. (*Qur'an* 5:35)

Kill not your children for fear of want. We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily, killing of them is a great sin. (*Qur'an* 17:31)

The Individual's Duties toward Society

It is a duty of the Muslim to society not to participate in depriving orphans of their rights or legitimate heirs of their inheritance, especially when the heirs are young or weak and cannot fight for their rights. Islam also forbids hoarding commodities and withholding them from free circulation for exploitative purposes by creating artificial scarcity. A person who hoards may be thinking that he is engaging in free-market trading, but in reality, he is causing harm to the general public and to the poor, in particular. Muslims are expected to honor their promises and break not their oaths, covenants and pledges, when they are concluded and mutually agreed upon. (*Qur'an* 4:58). Keeping these promises is believed to promote love and trust and eventually enable peace and harmony to prevail in society. In addition, the wealth and properties of others must be respected and never tampered with without due permission from their owners.

Duties to Our Relatives

On the individual level, there are also some duties that a Muslim owes to his parents, children, immediate family members, husbands and wives, neighbors, guests, visitors, countrymen, and non-Muslims. While Muslims must render duties to these people, they also have rights to claim from them. Muslims owe the above people these duties because of their relationship with them. The *Qur'an* commands Muslims to pay great attention to these duties and discharge them adequately. Their neglect may constitute a sin at times.

Duties to Children

While parents have to be respected, they have the duty not to kill their children or harm them at any circumstances, and for any reason. The Arabs before Islam used to kill their female babies for fear of poverty as well as to gain social and tribal honor.

When news is brought the one of them of (the birth of) a female child, his face darkens, and he is filled with grief. With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he had. Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust? What an evil (deed)! (*Qur'an* 16:58-59)

Islam requires parents to provide adequate education for their children and teach them about the religion of Islam until they reach the age of maturity, after which they are on their own. While parents equip their kids with whatever knowledge possible to make their lives successful, children are requested to pray for their parents to be blessed by God and to shower His mercy upon them. When the parents become old, their children must take care of them and provide for them the basic needs of life, as the parent's did for them when they were young. Sending parents to nursing homes is uncommon among Muslim sons and daughters. The elderly live with and help their children and other family members. When parents die, the children or relatives provide for their burial in an Islamic way and pay their debts if they owe.

In summation, parents are duly required to provide for their children an atmosphere of love, care, and understanding for their proper growth. They protect them against all evil, neglect, cruelty and exploitation. They should provide for them, if they are capable, the best available education and training so that they can be financially and occupationally independent when they grow up. They should also provide them with moral education and guide them toward spiritual development in order to be aware of God in whatever they embark upon in their lives.

Duties and Rights of Husband and Wife Women's Rights

As stated in Chapter VIII, men and women are equal before God. They receive reward or punishment according to their deeds and intentions.

For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise, for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward. (*Qur'an* 33:35)

In terms of economics, they have equal rights. Women have the right to whatever they earn or inherit.

Unto men a fortune from what they have earned (of wealth), and unto women a fortune from what they have earned (of wealth) both being free and equal with regard to the possession of their economic right. (*Qur'an* 4:32)

Unto the men (of a family) belongeth a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and unto the women a share of that which the parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much – a legal share. (*Qur'an* 4:7)

And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them according to what is equitable. (*Qur'an* 2:228)

In these verses, women's equal rights are established. They are free to make their own decisions, engage in business, work and earn livelihoods just as men are. They also have a great role to play in making decisions about their marriage. While their parents and guardians can advise them, their consent in marriage is crucial. After marriage, a woman becomes a wife. She has many rights to claim and some duties to fulfill. Islam teaches that the relationship between husband and wife must be cordial, based on mutual understanding and complementary and not like the relation of the ruler and the ruled. "They (women) are your garments, and ye (men) are their garments" (*Qur'an* 2:187). However, leadership and the head of the family status in Islam is given to the man due to his financial responsibilities (*Qur'an* 4:34). If he is to be an effective leader, he has to share, and seek advice and support from his wife in running the affairs of the family. "Believers are those who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation (*Qur'an* 42:38). Further, a wife must be treated with respect, compassion, cooperation and love.

And among His signs is that He created your mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts. Verily, in that are signs for those who reflect. (*Qur'an* 30:21)

And live and treat them (your wives) on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them, it may be that ye dislike a thing and God brings about through it a great deal of good. (*Qur'an* 4:19)

Kindness to her implies that she should not be falsely accused of immorality without genuine evidence. Her honor ought to be respected at all times.

And those who accuse clean women (of unchaste) and then produce not four eye witnesses, scourge them with eighty stripes and accept not their testimony forever. And these are the transgressors. (*Qur'an* 24:4)

Her mistakes should be tolerated and forgiven. Her voice has to be heard and given adequate attention. She also has the right to possession of her wealth, earnings and properties, and whatever she inherits. She has the freedom to give and spend her money in whatever way she wants. The rules that govern man also govern her when it comes to spending, except that she does not have to spend on her husband, though he is obligated to spend on her. If the husband's financial situation does not permit him to spend on her, she has the freedom to stay with him or seek divorce, or borrow money on his behalf to spend on herself. She is not obligated to stay in poverty, although culturally, many women stay with their husbands during times of hardship to keep the marriage and retain their marital bond.²⁸³

She also has the right to dress modestly and attend mosques for prayer if she wants. She cannot be prevented from fulfilling her religious duties, especially by attending mosque or learning about her religion. The Prophet emphasized that the best husbands are those who are the best to their wives and families. When disputes occur between husband and wife, particularly a breach of loyalty, Islam demands that it be resolved amicably and without transgression or oppression by either party. They may take the matter to court or resolve it amicably among themselves through arbitration. Muslims resort to the courts as the last option. Islam suggests that an arbitrary council be formed, which must consist of a representative of husband and wife. Both meet and resolve the problem. If this fails, then they go to court, which as stated is the last resort. Experience shows that people do not become or retain friendship after the court's decision or settlement. However, Muslims have the opportunity to remarry the same spouse after the first and second divorce. If a divorce occurs a third time, then remarriage

283 *Ibid.*, pp. 159-162.

becomes complicated. Yet, the door of reconciliation is not totally closed. There is always room for reunion.

Husband's Rights

Marriage is the building of a good relationship between spouses. The main duty of a wife to her husband lies in contributing to the success of the marital life by all possible means. She pays attention to the comfort and happiness of her husband by not intentionally offending or hurting his feelings and causing harm to him. He too should not offend her or cause harm to her. Being the head of the family, the husband must do what is lawful. She does not have to follow him if he requests she do wrong. Both are expected to be honest, faithful, and trustworthy. She receives no stranger without his permission. She disposes not any of his possessions through selling or offering them as gifts without his prior approval. Both should work out, among themselves, what is best for them. Respect for the opinions of each other must be established early in the marriage. It is a religious obligation on them to be compassionate and tolerant in dealing with one another.²⁸⁴

In addition, the husband has the right to a sexual relationship. This relationship is one of the purposes of marriage in Islam. She should not deny herself to him and is expected to be attractive and cooperative. He is expected to do the same by not denying himself to her. He must also try to be attractive, responsive, and cooperative. However, due consideration must be given to the health and interests of both parties. They must exercise decency and seek harmony in their relationship. If conflict arises, they should discuss it with politeness and solve it without abuse or aggression. They should treat one another as friends and like brothers and sisters.

However, the husband is permitted in Islam to marry a second wife, for certain reasons which have been explained in Chapter VIII of this work. If the wife does not want her husband to marry another wife, she must include that condition in her marriage-contract. If the husband later breaches that condition, she has full liberty to object or seek divorce from him. While the wife has so many rights to claim, the husband has few. Muslims in the U.S. and Europe are not allowed to marry a second wife because this is against the law of those countries

284 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

and this law must be respected by Muslims. Even in Muslim countries today, the marrying of more than one wife is becoming less and less frequent. Of course, in many Muslim countries, men dominate and exercise full control over their wives because of the culture, not because of Islam. This unchecked dominance stems from various local customs that people generally accept even though they are alien and repugnant to Islam. In Islamic law, details of the rights and duties of both wife and husband are elaborated. These laws aim at bringing peace and harmony to couples.

The Rights of the Children

Children have inalienable rights to claim from their parents as they also have some duties to render to them. Some of these rights accrue even before they are born. Among these rights are that parents should choose good partners for them to marry. Man chooses a good wife, woman chooses a good husband who is religious and responsible. Based on this notion, Islam forbids marrying adulterers or adulteresses. Islam demands that children be born in wedlock and placed with and entrusted to devoted parents of good character, people who highly value their children.²⁸⁵ The Prophet encourages his followers to be selective when choosing their life's partners. He says in one of the *Hadith*: "select for your seed (sperm) a good source." Prophet Muhammad sees marriage and having children as an investment in building a good community.

Children have the right, whenever they are conceived, to be born alive and live a decent life. Hence, abortion without the genuine justification of life threatening to the mother or baby is forbidden. No aborting is allowed for fear of poverty or scarcity of food. Muslim scholars have discussed extensively the legal rulings regarding abortion. The opinion of the majority is that there should be no abortion except for health reasons – and only those that endanger the mother's life. Some scholars do not consider abortion a killing if done a short time after conception, but after a certain period, it amounts to killing. Abortion before 120 days does not mean that the fetus has no soul; it means that it has not become 'a legal person' as held by Muslim scholars.²⁸⁶

285 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

286 For more information on Abortion, see: Therisa Rogers, "The Islamic Ethics of Abortion in the Traditional Islamic sources," in *Muslim World*, vol. 89, no. 2 (April

However, there are some Muslim scholars who object to abortion at any stage of conception. To them, abortion is ending a potential human life. First, it is unanimously agreed upon that abortion after the quickening of the embryo is religiously forbidden and legally punishable; if the fetus emerges alive, the offender shall be punished. In either case, the act is displeasing to God, and the offender will be subject to punishment in the future life. The quickening of the embryo is definitely established by the end of the fourth month after conception. Secondly, if it becomes certain that abortion is the only way to save the life of an endangered mother, then aborting is lawful, according to the general rule of recourse to the "lesser evil." Thirdly, Muslim jurists disagree with respect to abortion during the first four months of conception. Some hold it lawful on the ground that it entails no destruction of any real human life, since formation of the embryo is ascertained only after four months. Others forbid it because it is still a destruction of life in some form, a killing of what is a potential self.²⁸⁷ Muslim scholars permit the use of contraceptives to prevent pregnancy if both parents agree to its usage. If either partner objects to its use, it is not allowed for it will be tantamount to depriving the other of the joy of life, the blessing of having a child. Islam does not believe that the use of contraceptives is an attempt to kill an unborn baby. There is no baby and therefore there is no one being killed.

After birth, the child has the right to be cared and provided for financially until he attains maturity. The parents' responsibility remains binding as long as the child is minor or incapable of providing for or taking care of himself.²⁸⁸ Parents are responsible for their children's religious training, social nurturing, protection, guidance and showing tenderness and mercy to them. The child should not be killed or given up for adoption, which Islam condemns. The prohibition against adoption, argues Abdalati, does not negate the general responsibility of society to the child. Nor does it lessen the binding effects of the stronger

1999): 122-129; Daniel Brown, "Islamic Ethics in Comparative Perspective," in *Muslim World*, v. 89, no. 2 (April 1999): 181-192; Abul Fadl Mohsin Ebrahim, "Abortion," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, 4 vols. Ed. John Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), vol. 1: 17-19; Munawar Ahmad Anees, *Islam and Biological Futures*. London: Mansell Publishing, 1989.

287 Abdalati, *Family Structure*, p. 211.

288 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

bond of brotherhood in faith.²⁸⁹ If the parents are not capable financially of raising their offspring, then their immediate relatives should come to their aid. If they fail to do so, then the Muslim community is legally responsible to take care of those children. Nevertheless, the children still belong to their biological parents and not to foster parents and therefore their last names should not be changed.

Children have the right to receive a basic and moral education and be taught Islamic religion and proper manners. Islam asserts that everyone is born a Muslim, which is a state of natural submission to God. The parents are in the position to guide their children toward the recognition of One God. However, when they become mature, the child is at liberty to profess Islam as their religion or choose whatever religion they want. Islam should not be forced upon them, as stated in the *Qur'an* 2:256 that there is no compulsion in religion. Nevertheless, they must be taught about Islam. Otherwise, when they grow up, they will not have any religious background. It will be difficult for them to choose if there is nothing to choose from.

During the reign of Umar, the second caliph, a parent complained to Umar that his son was disrespectful to him. Umar asked him to bring his son. Upon questioning, the son asked Umar whether he had any rights over his father. Umar answered in affirmation that his father had the duty to choose a good, religious wife initially, that he should choose a good name for his son, and that he had the duty to raise him and provide him with an Islamic education by teaching him the *Qur'an*. The son responded that his father did none of what Umar had said. His father married a non-believer, gave him a bad name, and taught him nothing about the religion of Islam. Upon hearing this, Umar told the father that he had neglected his son before the latter disregarded him. Umar told the father to change his attitude toward his son, and educate him about religion. He advised the son to be kind to his father even though he had neglected his duty.

Duties of the Mother

As the father has various responsibilities to discharge, the mother's primary duty toward her children is to provide nursing and care for them. She should not relinquish this duty as long as she is able. Nobody

289 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

can care for children better than their mothers. Islam discourages mothers from delivering their children to babysitters for nursing. Muslims believe that nursing is not only feeding and keeping the child quiet, but giving children adequate attention, care and motherly love, which babysitters cannot provide because they lack the feeling of motherhood. And since children are so valuable, parents are the most capable people to take care of them.

Responsibility for and compassion towards the child is a matter of religious importance as well as a social concern. Whether the parents are alive or deceased, present or absent, known or unknown, the child is to be provided with optimum care. Where there are relatives close to the family, they should be responsible for the child's welfare; they shall be encouraged to discharge this duty. But if there is no next of kin, care for the child becomes the responsibility of the Muslim community, or designated officials.²⁹⁰

Parents' Rights regarding their Children

While Islam requires parents to provide, guide and care for their children until they reach the age of maturity, children must also reciprocate this kindness when the parents become old and cannot do things for themselves. Therefore, children have certain duties to render to their parents. First, children are supposed to obey their parents in what is morally right as defined by Islam. Parents should not be followed in wrong and evil deeds or on anything that conflicts with the rights of God. Children are only obligated to obey their parents on righteous deeds and not in disobeying God.

We have enjoined on man kindness to parents, but if they (either of them) strive (to force) thee to join with Me (in worship) anything of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not. Ye have (all) to return to Me, and I will tell you (the truth) of all that ye did. (*Qur'an* 29:8)

Some customs, traditions, or value systems may not in themselves constitute what is morally good in Islam. The right or wrong act is what

290 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

Islam declares to be right or wrong, as previously stated. Certainly, obedience to one's parents does not depend upon whether a person is Muslim or not, as presumed by some Muslims, especially by new converts to Islam. Parents deserve such rights for being the source of one's life and due to the immeasurable and ceaseless effort they render in the nursing and upbringing of their children. Islam demands that they be respected regardless of their religious beliefs. For instance, if the father happens to be a Hindu, who kills not animals for anything, and the son is a Muslim, who sacrifices animals like cows or goats for worship, especially during the annual Muslim's festival (*Eid al-Adha*), the son has an obligation to fulfill his religious duty of sacrifice. He follows not his father who condemns the slaughtering of animals. However, in obeying or disobeying, the children's attitude should not be allowed to become one of indiscriminate submissiveness or irresponsible defiance. Parents should be treated kindly at all times.

In addition, children have to show gratitude toward their parents. The rights of parents come second only to the highest value in Islam, the worship of Almighty God.

Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord, bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.' (*Qur'an* 17:23-24).

We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents, in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain, did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty month, at length, when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says: 'O my Lord, grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favor, which thou has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness, such as thou may approve. And be gracious to me in my issues. Truly, have I turned to thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam.' (*Qur'an* 46:15)

And we have enjoined on man to be good to his parents. In travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning, (hear the command), show gratitude to Me and to thy parents, to Me is thy (final) goal. But if they (parents) strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which Thou has no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love). In the end, the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you (the truth and meaning of) all that ye did. (*Qur'an* 31:14-15)

When parents become old, weak and cannot support themselves financially, children have to render support and maintenance for them as needed, provided that they are capable of doing so. If it happens that the child dies before the parents and leave behind some property, the parent is entitled to inherit one sixth of that wealth or property.

God (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one her share is a half. For parents, a sixth share of the inheritance to each, if the deceased left behind children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third. (*Qur'an* 4:11)

If parents have more than one child, the children should all support them fairly regardless of their sex as long as they are capable. 'The parents' need level, the children's capacity for support, comfort, and other variables are determined in accordance with the standard life of the time, but with a view to equity, kindness and moderation.'²⁹¹

The Rights of Relatives

Muslims have a duty to render to all of their relatives: sisters, brothers, uncles, cousins, nieces, aunts and all others. They should support their relatives when they are in need and maintain cordial relationships with them. These relatives are the ones to inherit from a

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

person when one has no immediate family, such as a son, daughter or parents. Siblings have a duty to take care of their relatives and support them wherever they are capable. Islam affirms that Muslims are sisters and brothers to one another. Nevertheless, the mutual responsibility, affinity, or kinship considerations should not be allowed to become burdensome so as to cause injustice, harm or deviation from the path of God and moral guidelines as set by the Prophet Muhammad. No children or relatives should be overburdened with these responsibilities if they do not have what needs to be offered. Anything they offer, however little it is, should be appreciated.

Duties to Neighbors, Friends, and Associates

Humans are social beings. They relate and associate with one another everyday on many different levels. Muslims live among neighbors, relatives, friends, co-workers and associates. Muslims are commanded in the *Qur'an* to be kind to their neighbors and friends, respect them and prevent harm upon them. According to the Prophet Muhammad, a true Muslim is one from whom all human beings are safe from the harm/evil of his hands and tongue. That is, one who causes no harm to others, neither by his hands (actions) nor by his tongue (words). Indeed, the conscience of a true believer will not be at rest while his neighbors and relatives are suffering. Thus, whatever he has, he shares with others.²⁹² Muslims are expected also to give gifts to their relatives, neighbors, friends, and associates.

Serve God and join not equals with Him, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors, who are near, neighbors who are strangers, and what your right hands possess, for God loveth not the arrogant, the vain-glorious. (*Qur'an* 4:36).

Muslims have the duty to protect their neighbors and brothers. Such duty is a communal responsibility as ordained by the Prophet who said: "help your brother whether he is the doer of wrong or wrong is done to him." His disciples asked how they could help the wrong-doer. The

Prophet said that they should prevent him from doing wrong again and let him recognize that his action was wrong. 'The individual's role is so essential in building a peaceful Islamic society. "He perfects it and he is perfected by it; he gives to it and he receives from it; he protects it and he is protected by it."²⁹³ Islam encourages its adherents to render good advice to those who need it, including neighbors. Muslims should help others and cause no harm to them at any time.

Rights of Orphans

Orphans and the destitute are given a special attention in Islam. Their rights are analyzed and fully protected. Their properties are not to be tampered with but are returned to them in full when they grow and reach the age of maturity. The legal guardians of orphans are instructed in the *Qur'an* not to take advantage of orphans' weaknesses or to cheat or oppress them.

Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans eat up a fire into their bellies; they will soon be enduring a blazing fire. (*Qur'an* 4:10)

Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness. (*Qur'an* 93:9; 4:5-6; 4:127).

If orphans are in need and their guardians are unable to assist them, *Zakat* money from the Muslim treasury can be given to them. If their immediate families cannot support them, then the Muslim community must come to their rescue. Perhaps the property left for them by their parents can be used on such occasion.

They ask thee concerning the orphans, say: the best thing to do is what is for their good. If ye mix their (financial) affairs with yours (as co-partners) they are your brethren (and as such entitled to all generosity and love). But God knoweth the man who means mischief from the man who means good. (*Qur'an* 2:220)

292 R. A. Azzam, *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*, trans. by Caesar Farah (New York: The Devin Adair Co., 1964), p. 91.

293 Caesar E. Farah, *Islam: Beliefs and Observances* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 2000), p. 128.

So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek the countenance of God and it is they who will prosper. (*Qur'an* 30:38)

We may conclude from the above that Islam lays strong emphasis on the cultivation of good feeling and the encouragement of offering maximum assistance to those who are in need, to ensure their well-being and happiness in all respects. It is when a group of people in the community is extremely rich and others are extremely poor, and the former fails to take care of the latter, that society lives in fear and distress because of corruption and injustice. Thus, the poor will resort to any dubious and unethical means in order to survive because they have been neglected. When they have nothing to live on, they care less about causing harm to others.

Rights of Guests and Hosts

Hospitality has been part and parcel of Islamic culture from its inception. Even before the advent of Islam, Arabs were famous for their extreme and excessive hospitality to their guests. Islamic literature is full of fascinating stories about their hospitality and the honoring of their guests. The *Qur'an* records the story of Prophet Abraham and his guests. When he provided them with food and the guests failed to eat, Abraham became uneasy.

Has the story reached thee of the honored guests of Abraham? Behold, they entered his presence, and said: 'Peace!' He said, 'Peace!' (And thought), 'These seem unusual people.' Then he turned quickly to his household, brought out a fatted calf, and placed it before them. He said, 'Will ye not eat?' (When they did not eat, he conceived a fear of them. They said, 'Fear not,' and they gave him glad tiding of a son (which God will give him) endowed with knowledge. (*Qur'an* 51:24-28)

From this and similar stories and events during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad and his companions, it is established that a Muslim respects his guest, provides food and drink for him, defends and

protects him against all wrong, and wishes him well. The guest has the right to be fed from one to three days. After three days, he is required to leave at the request of the host or he takes care of himself. In return, the guest wishes his host good will, causes no harm to him and does not overburden him by asking what his host cannot provide. He should be happy with whatever is offered to him. If he likes it, he takes it; if he dislikes it, he leaves it untouched without complaint. Kindness and the hospitality of one's host should not be abused. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have told his followers that a true believer respects his guest and treats him well. It is required that the guest seek permission to visit the host. If he receives no permission, he should not visit. On arriving at the house of his host, he knocks at the door and seeks permission to enter. If he is not permitted or nobody answers, he should not enter, even if he thinks that there are people inside.

And if you find no one therein, enter not until permission has been given. And if you are asked to go back, go back, for it is purer for you. And God is all knower of what you do. (*Qur'an* 24:28)

Culturally, many Muslims do not adhere to this command. Muslims often visit one another without asking for permission. This is considered an intrusion but few complain about it even though it is a burden on the host at times. Culturally, too, they visit one another at any time and waste as much time as they can. Even during the time of the Prophet, God revealed to Muhammad to instruct his followers to depart from Muhammad's home after the meal. Arab Muslims are very reluctant to tell a guest to leave regardless of whatever inconvenience they are experiencing.

O you who believe, enter not the Prophet's houses unless permission is given to you for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken your meal, disperse, without sitting for a talk. Verily, such (behavior) annoys the Prophet, and he is shy of (asking) you (to go), but God is not shy of (telling) you the truth. (*Qur'an* 33:53)

Rights of Other Creatures: Animals and Birds

God created everything and made human beings His vicegerent on earth (*Qur'an* 2:30). He endowed them with the faculty of thinking. Through this faculty, they are able to manage their lives and control all other creatures, which God has made subservient to them. They may domesticate any animal and use it when they want for their interests. According to Islam, the use of animals should be on the basis of necessity and with compassion, humility and love. It should not be "with malevolence, avidity, or greed for the satisfaction of creature-comfort, luxurious pleasures and self-indulgence."²⁹⁴ Islam states that every Muslim has some duties to other creatures under their control. In the *Qur'an* 4:36, Yusuf Ali, in his commentary argues that the phrase: "*wa ma malakat aymanukum*," i.e., that which your right hand possesses includes animals that are in the human's possession.²⁹⁵

Islam teaches that Muslims should be kind to animals. They do no harm to them. Prophet Muhammad has said: "*La darara wala Dirara*." That is, Muslims should not cause harm to themselves or inflict pain on others; it is forbidden. Animals have their own environments and communities that should not be destroyed.

There is neither an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. (*Qur'an* 6:38)

Animals communicate with one another and with humans at times. They work with one another as a team, such as bees: they protect one another, build houses and do many other things just like human beings. They are in their own world. Nonetheless, Islam allows Muslims to benefit from them for human needs as long as there is no misuse or abuse. The *Qur'an* states that God created cattle for humans so they can use them for transportation like horses, camels, donkeys, etc. (*Qur'an* 16:5-8, 66; 23:21-22). Other animals are created for human consumption (*Qur'an* 40:79-80). Humans are responsible for protecting these animals from danger. Animals are not capable

of protecting themselves all the time from human aggressions and abuse.

In Islam, all life is sacred and must be preserved. Animals' lives are sacred too. They can only be slaughtered for food and for necessary research when another alternative cannot be found. Prophet Muhammad has said:

There is no man who kills (even) a sparrow or anything smaller, without it deserving it, but God will question him about it. And he who takes pity (even) on a sparrow or anything smaller, God will be merciful on him on the Day of Judgment.

All lives are a gift from God. No one has the right to terminate an animal's life without genuine justification. Otherwise, such killing or termination is tantamount to committing the murder of such animals.

Islam also forbids cruelty to animals in any form and under any pretext. It is forbidden to use animals as targets for shooting. The Prophet condemns the cutting off of any part of an animal when it is still alive, such as cutting off the humps or fat tails of sheep, or braiding the face of an animal. He declares that whatever is cut off of an animal while it is still alive is carrion and thus unlawful to eat. Inflicting injury to animals, either by breaking the neck, skinning, or slicing off any of its parts, or by forcibly storing milk in its udder in order to make more profit, is also forbidden. Animal fighting, such as bull-fights and cock-fights, which entice animals to tear themselves apart in order to provide amusement for people and enrich their owners financially is prohibited. To Muslims, this is not amusement but moral decadence. In Islamic law, the meat of the animals who die as a result of such a fight are unlawful to eat. For instance, the Spaniards hold fiestas on special occasions to eat the bull killed by a matador. This is unacceptable in Islam.

Islam does not tolerate cruelty to animals. Even when Muslims have to slaughter animals for eating, they must sharpen their knives or blades and swiftly cut the animal's throat so as not to cause much pain to them. The Prophet Muhammad has said as reported by Shaddad bin Aws, a companion of the Prophet, that:

²⁹⁴ Al-Hafiz B. A. Masri, *Animals in Islam* (England, Petersfield: The Athene Trust, 1989), pp. 2-3.

²⁹⁵ Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983), p. 191, note # 553 on *Qur'an* ch 4: 36.

God, who is blessed and exalted, has prescribed benevolence toward everything [and has ordained that everything be done in a good way]; so, when you must kill, do it in the best manner; and when you slaughter an animal, you should (use the best method and) sharpen your knife, so as to ease the animal from pain as possible.²⁹⁶

Of course, any un-slaughtered animal is unlawful for consumption. Further, although Islam does not encourage the domestication of animals, when Muslims keep pets like cats, birds, and dogs (the latter can only be kept for security purposes), they must take care of them and treat them humanely. They must feed them; provide shelter for them without excess. Showering pets every day or every week, overfeeding them, buying expensive beds, coats, and toys, sending them greeting cards on their birthdays, doing Doggy Yoga, or burying them like human beings when they die by spending hundreds of dollars on funeral services, are considered excessive care and abnormal in Islam, for animals do not recognize these things. These are against their natures. Pets do not need greeting cards to feel happy, after all, they cannot read the contents of those cards.²⁹⁷ These are abuses to animals in our view and Muslims should spend their wealth on good things that benefit the community at large.

Nonetheless, intentional neglect of animals also warrants great punishment in Islam. It is reported in *Hadith* that the Prophet Muhammad informed his companions about a lady whom God would punish because of her neglect of her cat. She imprisoned her cat and did not feed her; neither did she give her water nor let her go out to eat after it became ill until the cat died. Muhammad did not see any justification for such a cruel treatment. On the other hand, if a Muslim discharges his duties towards animals or his pets, he receives reward from God. Prophet Muhammad told a story of a person who got lost in the desert. He became extremely thirsty and eventually found a well. He

went into it and drank some water. When he came out, he found a dog lolling out his tongue, panting. The man immediately recognized that the dog needed water. He went back into the well and fetched water with his shoes and held it with his mouth until he was able to give it to the dog. Muhammad said that God was so pleased with the kindness of that man to the dog that God forgave him all his sins. When Prophet Muhammad told his companions this story, they were astonished, and asked: "Would we be rewarded for feeding our animals?" The Prophet answered that God would reward them for feeding their pets or other animals or humans.²⁹⁸

Finally, Islam condemns all forms of humanizing or de-humanizing animals by preventing them from their natural habitat (lives), either by dressing them up like humans, which actually prevents them from scratching their bodies, or by cutting their nails, fingers or tails so as to prevent them from attacking others. By so doing, they prevent the animal from its natural way of life. A cat that has no claws, whose nails are cut, is no more a cat. Also, chickens and hens are packed in steel cages, fed, injected with chemicals to lay as many eggs as possible. Thus, in those cages, they cannot stretch their legs, or flip their wings, for many of them actually have no feathers at all. They cannot perch. They do not eat natural food; they are only reared for the massive production of eggs. These are not hens or chicken in reality; they are machines and have no natural lives of their own. Abu A'la Mawdudi says:

God has honored man with authority over His countless creatures. Everything has been harnessed for him. He has been endowed with the power to subdue them and make them serve his objectives. This superior position gives man an authority over them and he enjoys the right to use them as he likes. But that does not mean that God has given him unbridled liberty. Islam says that all the creation has certain rights upon man. They are: he should not waste them on fruitless ventures nor should he unnecessarily hurt or harm them. When he uses them for his service, he should cause them the least possible harm, and should employ the best and the

296 Narrated by Imam Muslim in *Forty Hadith* on the section on slaughtering.

297 Setting a special time for animal service is not encouraged in Islam. Organizing running competition for cats and dogs is also not endorsed by Islam. Muslims consider this an abuse to animals because we have seen that animals who do not win are punished by their owners.

298 Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in *Sahih al Bukhari* in the book of giving water to the dog.

least injurious methods of using them. ...Islam allows the killing of dangerous and venomous animals and of beast of prey only because it values man's life more than theirs. But here too it does not allow their killing by resort to prolonged painful methods. ...Islam distinctly forbids man to keep them hungry, to take hard and intolerable work from them and to beat them cruelly. To catch birds and imprison them in cages without any special purpose is considered abominable.²⁹⁹

Morality in Islam is to do good deeds, forbid evil deeds, be just and show kindness to all creatures.

Manners of Greeting, Eating, Drinking and Daily Cleansing

Any discussion of Islamic morals is incomplete without reference to some of the Islamic daily manners. These manners are the subject of appreciation at times and of derision at others from those who are not familiar with them. We are not permitted by time or space to detail all Islamic manners here, so we'll limit our discussion to manners of greeting, eating, drinking and daily cleansing of the body for Islamic daily prayers.

Greeting

Whenever a Muslim meets another Muslim, he greets him by saying: "*as-salaam Alaykum*," (peace be unto you). The greeted person responds by saying: "*wa alaykumu Salaam*," (peace be unto you too). God says in the *Qur'an*: "*When a courteous greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. God takes careful account of all things.*" (*Qur'an* 4:86). Even when Muslims enter their homes, they are required to ask for God's blessings. "... *if ye enter houses, salute each other with greeting of blessing and purity as from God, thus does God make clear the signs to you that ye may understand.*" (*Qur'an* 24:61). If they meet several times daily, they repeat the greeting

²⁹⁹ Abu A'la Mawdudi, *Toward Understanding Islam*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1980), pp. 114-115.

each time. This is a universal greeting among Muslims. Through it, they identify themselves wherever they are. The expression "good morning" or "hi" is uncommon among Muslims. Of course, there are a few people who continue to greet one another by saying, "good morning" or "*sabahul Khayr*" in some Arab and Muslim countries, but this is fading out. Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the Arab world greet one another with "*Salaam Alaykum*," peace be unto you. By extension, those who are passing by or standing greet those who are sitting, and the young greet an elderly person first. Shaking-hands are always done with the right hand. Shaking with the left hand, regardless of the cause, is considered inappropriate and incites immediate anger and unpredictable emotional reaction. Also, young people and children do not call their parents or those who are older by their names. Rather, they call them by nicknames like father of or mother of and their child's name, i.e., the name of the first born son, or girl when there are no sons; additional nicknames include grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt, sister, brother, *Shaykh*, and so on. Students do not call their teachers by their real names. It is considered a lack of respect to do so. In Islamic tradition, a religious teacher is perceived as heir to the Prophet, and thus he is accorded great respect at all times, especially if he or she is an old teacher. Unfortunately, these good manners are fading through the influence of secularism and modernity. On the other hand, Islam discourages bending or bowing for another human being during greeting. Only God deserves to be bent for and bowed for, Muslim theologians argue. However, in some Muslim countries, people follow their local traditions and customs in greeting rather than the teachings of Islam, even though the phrase: "*salaam alaykum*" is commonly used.

Etiquette of Eating and Drinking

Eating and drinking are part of human daily life. Generally, while many Muslims take coffee, tea, or snacks outside their homes, most breakfasts and dinners are prepared and taken at home. What Muslims can and cannot eat or drink has been elaborated in Islamic law books. For instance, Muslims should not eat any pig products or unslaughtered animals. It is untrue that Arabs do not slaughter pigs because they do

not have many pigs, as suggested by some people, but because God forbids eating pigs. Avoiding the consumption of pig or swine was not a new message from God, He had previously instructed the Christians and the Jews within their scriptures too. Muslims are instructed not to eat pork or serve it to others. Modern science has proven that eating pork is harmful to the body because pig's bodies contain many toxins, worms and latent diseases. Because scientists have studied the pig and noted that preparations of pig products must be cooked thoroughly at very high temperatures, often with no real guarantee of making it totally safe for human consumption, it makes perfect sense that it would be forbidden to eat, especially in times prior to the advent of the technology we have today. Any food that Muslims consume must be lawful and the animals should be slaughtered in the Islamic way, except for seafood.

Muslims are allowed to eat seafood. When Prophet Muhammad was asked about seafood, he answered that its products are lawful to eat (whether they are dead or not). In Islam, all food is lawful except the few that the law declares forbidden.

O ye who believe, eat of the good things that We have provided for you. And be grateful to God if it is Him you worship. He has only forbidden you dead meat (*mayta*), and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name has been invoked besides that of God. But if one is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits, then he is guiltless. For God is Oft forgiving, most Merciful. (*Qur'an* 2:172-173)

Before eating, cleanliness is required. Muslims are taught to wash their hands before and after eating. It is interesting to note that many Muslims eat with their fingers, particularly in their homes. Before they begin eating, they say a prayer, "*Bismillah ar-Rahmaani ar-Raheem*," (In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful). There are many other short acceptable prayers in Arabic that Muslims can recite before and after eating or drinking. But the *Basmalat* is the most common. Similarly, the same expression is used in different ways for different purposes. For instance, when a visitor or guest arrives at his host's

house, he is invited in by saying to him: "*Bismillah*," i.e., come in with the name of God. When the table of food is set, the hosts invite their guests to the dining table by saying: "*Bismillah*." This means, come and let us eat in the name of God. Also, when people meet and want to disperse, they tell one another: "*Bismillah*," i.e., let us go in the name of God. Using this expression is very common among Muslims all over the world regardless of their countries, although committed Muslims use it more often.

After eating, they thank God by saying: "*Al-Hamdu Lillah*," which means, thanks to Almighty God. The majority of Muslims all over the world use the same expression. When eating, everyone is expected to use his/her right hand, even those who are left-handed. Each person eats from what is nearest to him/her on the plate or bowl. Muslims often eat together from the same plate. The habit of each person putting his/her food on a separate plate is uncommon and also discouraged. Of course, many Muslims today, particularly in the West, imitate Western manners of eating by eating separately. Many Muslims have also developed the habit of eating with their left hands to imitate Westerners. This is a habit of which Islam disapproves. When eating together, an older person begins before the younger ones. When they have guests or visitors, Muslims make sure that their guests begin first and encourage them to eat more. The family will continue to serve their guests until they are satisfied. After they finish eating, the elderly people or guests leave the table before the host.

Family members often eat together from the same plate unless they have guests, whence men and women separate. Guests do not only thank their hosts, they are required to pray for them. In Islamic tradition, it is an insult and culturally unacceptable to ask a guest whether he wants to eat or drink. Rather, he is asked what kind of food or drink he likes or prefers to take. Muslims believe that visitors and guests must always be offered some hospitality. They do not have to request it. Prophet Muhammad strongly encourages his followers to respect their guests. He said in a *Hadith* that a true believer in God and the Day of Judgment should honor his guests and neighbors. If the guest likes what is offered to him, he eats or drinks it; if he dislikes it, he leaves it without complaint. He might be encouraged to make another choice and if he refrains, he is left alone.

Drinking

The common practice of consuming alcohol in any form, especially the frequent drinking of a beer or a glass of wine after work, with a meal, at a social gatherings or at other events as practiced in the West is frowned upon. Islam prohibits the drinking of alcohol in any quantity at all times.

O ye who believe, intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination) by arrows, are an abomination of Satan's handwork, eschew such (abomination) that ye may prosper. (*Qur'an* 5:90)

God forbids the drinking of alcohol or wine. It is believed to be harmful to human health. This has been proved by modern science. It also impairs reasoning and thus jeopardizes obedience to the divine will of God. Wine or alcohol in Islamic definition is any substance that intoxicates regardless of the name given to it. In the Arabic language, it is called "*khamr*." That is, anything that covers or prevents the brain from functioning well. Modern science has shown that those who refrain from alcohol and drug use are healthier than those who don't, regardless of the amount they consume. Alcohol addiction is a major health and social problem in the United States. Close to 18 million Americans are habitual drinkers. The bad effects of alcohol on the major organs are well-known. Practically, alcohol consumption damages the liver, gastrointestinal tract, central nervous system, pancreas, and heart. However, the effect of alcohol on the endocrine and metabolic systems is neither well described nor appreciated by the general public.³⁰⁰

The consumption of wine and its trade is considered among the gravest of sins in Islam. It is perceived to be the cause and mother of all evils by the Prophet Muhammad. According to him, when a person loses his reasoning faculty through the drinking of alcohol, he is potentially dangerous, for he can do all evils without knowing. In order to prevent this from occurring, Islam strongly condemns the consumption of alcohol. Islam is not the only religion that condemns the consumption of alcohol. Neither is Islam the only monotheistic

300 Shahid Athar, M. D. "The Endocrine and Metabolic Effects of Alcoholism."

A paper presented at the 27th Annual convention of the Islamic Medical Association of North America, held in Oak Brook, Illinois on July 21, 1994.

religion which has taken a negative attitude toward alcohol; it is well-known that, according to the Old Testament (Numbers VI:3), the Nazirite who had wholly devoted himself to Yahweh had to abstain from wine and spirits, just as the priests before administering the sacred rites (Lev. X: 9). The Nabateans, according to Diodorus Siculus (xix:94, 3), abstained from wine, and one of their gods is called in their inscriptions "the good god who drinks no wine." Likewise, many Christian monks abstain from drinking wine.³⁰¹

Not all Muslims always adhere to the prohibition of alcohol. However, when a drunkard is caught and brought to court, if he is convicted, he receives eighty lashes as punishment. It is due to this legal prohibition and punishment in Muslim countries and communities throughout the world that the number of alcohol and drug cases is statistically lower for Muslims. The major causes of vehicular accidents and domestic violence in the U.S are attributed to the effects of alcohol and drug abuse. In Some Muslim countries like Saudi-Arabia, Yemen, and Iran, liquor is not sold publicly. Anyone caught drunk is liable to be punished for causing harm to himself and to the public in general. This is not to say that nobody drinks wine in these countries. Some do, especially foreign workers. But the sale of liquor is illegal as well as the drinking of alcohol in public. The principle followed by Islam in this regard affirms that a Muslim should not cause any harm to himself or to others, and that anything whose harm is greater than its benefit should be abandoned. Not everything that Islam discourages or forbids is intrinsically evil but may lead to unsatisfactory results if it is allowed and, therefore, Islam takes preventive measures to curb evils and crimes before their occurrence.

Gambling

Another social practice that Islam condemns is gambling. This is to bet on an uncertain outcome in a contest or game of chance for stakes. In Islamic terminology, gambling is every practice in which there is an element of chance, particularly when it involves the winning of money or valuable objects. Gambling includes the lottery. It is also a transaction in which property changes hands arbitrarily and unproductively. The result is to gain something too easily - gain one has not worked for. No

301 Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, s. v. *Kamr*.

labor is put in such a game that deserves the reward accrued from it. Gambling is a pure game of chance.

Islam forbids gambling and perceives it as a serious social evil that Muslims should resist. Many reasons are given in the *Qur'an* for its prohibition:

- 1) it causes quarrels among gamblers, which may lead to violence. It also breeds enmity;
- 2) it interferes with the performance of worship of God and it prevents believers from practicing their five daily prayers on time;
- 3) it causes distress to those who lose their money or valuable properties in a short time;
- 4) it causes dislocation and social ills in the community as it ruins the Muslim's spiritual life in that instead of working hard, they maintain fake reliance on God by hoping that they will win one day, and thus disturbing the natural law. And when they win, they mismanage the winnings because they have not worked hard for it. The *Qur'an* states:

O ye who believe, intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination, of Satan's handiwork. Eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper. Satan's plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of God, and from prayer. Will ye not then abstain? (*Qur'an* 5:90-91)

Robert Charles in his work *Gambling and Betting* argues against gambling and betting. To him, gambling is an evil, morally unacceptable act because:

- a) it is wrong to revert from moral to immoral methods in games or business. Property can only "be legitimately transferred either by gift, or by exchange of labor or through inheritance. Therefore to decide the ownership of property by an appeal to chance (gambling or betting) whether the

property in question be a mere trifle or a sum of more vital moment cannot be other than an immoral action."³⁰²

- b) gambling goes against the well-being of society in that it amounts to the holding of unearned gains, which is immoral, because it brings pleasure to winners, who are few in number at the expense of the losers, who are the majority. To Charles, "gambling is one of the most disintegrating and dehumanizing influences in life; it breeds inevitably callousness of heart and sheer pitilessness for the interest of others." He adds that gambling ruins the personality of the gambler in regard to the elementary virtues of honesty and trust.³⁰³

Seen from this social perspective, Islam prohibits gambling. It does not deny its limited benefit but emphatically asserts that it has greater harm than good for individuals and society.

They ask thee concerning wine and gambling, say in them is great sin and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than their profit. (*Qur'an* 2:219)

This condemnation has not eliminated gambling in the Muslim world. Some Muslims still play lotteries and engage in various kinds of gambling on a daily basis. But as Frank Rosenthal points out, "Islam succeeded in keeping its impact upon society largely under control."³⁰⁴ The principle followed by Islam in this regard affirms that a Muslim should not cause any harm to himself or to others, and that anything whose harm is greater than its benefit should be abandoned.

The Etiquette of Cleansing the Body

Islam from its inception placed great emphasis on the purification of the body and of the soul. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, asserts that the purification of the body and of the soul amounts to one half of the religion; other religious requirements are perceived as the other

302 Robert Charles, *Gambling and Betting* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924), p. 31.

303 *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

304 Frank Rosenthal, "Khamr" in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, CD-Rom edition, version 1.00, vol. 5: 108-110

one-half. While abstinence from alcohol and drugs aims at purification of the inner human body and the prohibition of gambling aims at preventing the soul from greed and ill reliance on chance for attaining one's livelihood, the cleansing of the outer parts of the body is an attempt to keep the physical body healthy and prevent germs from penetrating into it. Therefore, before a Muslim embarks on any Islamic prayer, the law requires him to wash some parts of his body through ablution (*wudu*) or through a ritual bath (*ghusl*).

O ye who believe, when ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. God doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete His favor to you, that ye may be grateful. (*Qur'an* 5:6).

The Prophet Muhammad adds a few things that Muslims have to do when making ablution. Among these are that they should use water to clean their private parts anytime they urinate or answer the call of nature. In the absence of water they can use other objects like toilet paper for cleansing. That is, even today, when toilet paper is available, Muslims must clean their parts with water in addition to using toilet paper. They must also wash their hands after using restrooms. These are religious requirements commanded by God. There are certain prayers to be said after using the toilet and when making ablution. Prophet Muhammad affirms that making ablution five times for the daily prayers will definitely cleanse one's body from all dirt as well as from sin. He likens the making of ablution to a person who has a stream or river in front of his house and bathes therein five times daily. He says no dirt will remain on that person's body. Even when a Muslim does not intend to perform any prayer, he is encouraged to make ablution so as to be in a state of purity. The purification of the body and soul is

at the core of the Islamic faith, as pointed out by Imam al-Ghazali, the 11th century Muslim theologian and jurist. If a Muslim prays without making ablution first, his prayer is void and he receives no reward for it.

The Meaning of Purification in Islam (*tabarah*)

Muslim jurists (*ulama*) in the four schools of Islamic law define purification in different ways. The Hanafi jurists define it (*tabarah*) as a cleansing from the dirt both physically and spiritually. An example of cleanliness from physical dirt is performing minor ritual purity (*wudu*), which is the washing of some parts of the body for the purpose of prayer. Impurities are of two dimensions: minor and major. Minor impurity (*hadath*) occurs after urinating, using the restroom or passing gas. Major impurity (*khubth*) occurs after having sexual relations, discharging sperm, washing a dead body, menstruating or excessive bleeding of any type. In the Hanafi school, impurity (*al-hadath*) is that unclean substance that God wishes to be cleansed. Ablution (*wudu*) helps to get rid of this condition.

As observed in the above definition, what actually constitutes impurity is what the law considers unclean even though we human beings may not perceive it to be unclean, like the passing of gas. For Muslims, the act of purification is a ritual and worship (*ibadah*). Hence, its primary goal is to create in believers total submission to God. If God decrees that a Muslims should purify their bodies in a specific way, true Muslims have no choice but to comply and submit to the will of God. Thus, it can be concluded that ritual purification in Islam aims at removal of impurities from the body, clothes and places of prayer. Without the elimination of every blemish, the performance of any Islamic prayer will be invalid. Certainly, anyone who is in a state of impurity cannot perform the Islamic daily prayers, or make the (*taawaaf*), the running around of the house of God in Mecca. The impurity can be easily removed by performing ablution (*wudu*) with clean and pure water when available. In the absence of water, or inability to use water due to a sickness, clean sand (*turab*) can be used.³⁰⁵ This is known as "*tayammum*." The *tayammum* is to put your two palms on

³⁰⁵ Readers should refer to Islamic law books for more information about Islamic rituals and ablution.

clean sand, rub your face with it, then put your two palms on clean sand again and rub your arms, right and left with it. You must have the intention of cleanliness when doing this. Again this can only be done in the absence of water or when its usage is harmful or hurtful to the user.

Summary

Moral values are the cornerstone of the Islamic social structure, the vehicle of the relationship between believers and their Creator, and between individuals and members of society. Islamic morals aim at molding individual characters to value and practice what is right and praiseworthy, and avoid what is wrong and reprehensible. They represent sets of rules, which govern Muslim behaviors and tend to preserve the integrity of society, develop it and reform human beings.³⁰⁶ Morality in Islam stems from the awareness of the unity of God, that He alone deserves to be worshipped as the Creator; He has the prerogative right to define the right and the wrong. God revealed His rules in the *Qur'an* to Prophet Muhammad, who in turn taught his followers what he received. The religion of Islam teaches not only how to worship God but also how to relate to and live with other human beings peacefully. Prophet Muhammad explains what is right and what is wrong and explicates in detail the obligations and rights of each individual toward himself, his God, and his society. By right, we mean the duty that someone must perform to us, and by duty, we mean what we owe to others. In that sense, the Prophet teaches that every Muslim has a duty toward others. He affirms in the *Hadith*, as reported by Abdullah bin Umar, that:

Every one of you is a guardian (shepherd) and is responsible for his charge. The ruler is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man (father or husband) is a guardian in his family and is responsible for his charges. A woman is a guardian of her husband's house or home and is responsible for her charges. A servant is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible

for his charge. A man is a guardian of his father's property and is responsible for his charges. So every one of you is a guardian and everyone is responsible for his charge.³⁰⁷

Prophet Muhammad calls the attention of his followers to the fact that being a Muslim involves more than practicing the five pillars of Islam and observing Islamic law. Rather, it is being righteous, kind, compassionate and taking care of others as stated in the *Qur'an*.

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces toward East or west, but it is righteousness to believe in God and the last day, and the angels, and the book, and the messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (of suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing. (*Qur'an* 2:177)

By no means shall you attain righteousness (piety) unless you spend (in God's cause) of that which you love; and whatever of good you spend, God knows it well. (*Qur'an* 3:92).

Even though the *Qur'an* cannot be read as a textbook of morals, it certainly contains many verses that deal with moral issues and principles of ethics. The major moral codes are elaborated in the *Qur'an* 17:23-39, which Muslims consider to be the ten commandments of Islam. These commandments were later elaborated upon by Prophet Muhammad, who added a few other codes like the principle of no-harm. Morally, a Muslim maintains and guides his internal (soul) and external behavior. He is to champion what is right and fight what is wrong; seek what is true and abandon what is evil and avoid that which is indecent. To fulfill the above, Prophet Muhammad gave detailed instructions on the duties and rights of every individual in society. From the *Qur'an* and

306 Habib Fekih, "Moral Thought," in *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture*, ed., A. Bouhdiba (Unesco Publishing, 1998), p. 79.

307 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Nikah, vol. 3: 733.

his own assertions, he referred to the abundant reward which awaits those who fulfill their duties; punishment awaits those who deliberately disregard their duties toward others.

There are basically four types of duties: duty to God, duty to oneself, duty to others (the members of the society), and duty to other creatures under human control. Humans are expected to keep balance among these obligations. Even though they have been strongly encouraged to take care of others, they should not neglect themselves. Islam values moderation in everything. Muslims are not supposed to pray every minute of the day, or fast every day, or abandon the sexual rights of their spouses under the pretext of worshipping God, because each person has his or her right and equilibrium must be maintained.

It was reported that a group of people asked the wife of Prophet Muhammad about his devotions in his private life. When they were told, they considered their efforts and devotions inadequate in comparison to Prophet Muhammad's devotions. Thereupon they pledged that they would not marry anymore, they would not sleep anymore but spend their time at night for voluntary prayers, and that they would not eat during the day but fast so as to be close to God and win His pleasure. When Muhammad heard them, he warned them and prevented them from carrying out their decision. He emphasized to them that despite the fact that he was a prophet, he married, fasted and suspended fasting at times; he observed prayers at night but also slept at night. "He who turns away from my traditions," he warned them, "has no relationship with me."³⁰⁸ Thus, in Islam, the body has its own rights upon the person; the wife has her own rights to claim from her husband and vice-versa; society has some rights, and individuals have some rights and duties to discharge.

We define duty as the obligation we owe to others, and right as what others owe to us. Some of what we owe to others is necessary to discharge, while other obligations are recommended only. Upon the whole, if the individual fails to fulfill his duties, there will be hardship and strife in the community. Islam insists that commanding good and forbidding evil should be a continuous process and remains a duty of both individuals and society.

As to who defines and determines what is right or wrong, the majority of Muslim theologians (*al-Mutakalimun*) are inclined to accept the concept of voluntarism, the idea that God alone defines good and bad. Good deeds are good because God commands them, and bad deeds are evil because God forbids them. Of course, there are some scholars, especially the Mu'tazilite (the Rationalists), who insist that God commands good action because of its intrinsic goodness and condemns bad deed due to its negative intrinsic nature. To this latter group, God would never command evil. But the Voluntarists, the Ash'arites, claim that God has the freedom to command evil, but He would not do so due to His justice and mercy. Moral acts, argue the Ash'arites, are quite independent of their consequences. Thus, God alone determines and defines what is right or wrong without taking into consideration human judgment about the resulting benefit or harm from the act. Being the Creator, He knows what is best for His creatures. Whatever He decrees is right. The majority of Sunni Muslims believe that God cannot be wrong. He knows the past, present, and future, whereas human beings are ignorant of so many things. They are also limited in their knowledge, which prevents them from making good judgment at times.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the position of Sunni Muslims is that God defines right and wrong. He rewards those who do good deeds and punishes those who disobey Him and define for themselves what is good or bad. Abu Hanifah, the founder of the Hanafi School of law, said in his formulation of the Islamic creed:

We confess that the decision concerning good and evil wholly depends on God. For whoever should say that the decision regarding good and evil depends upon another than God would thereby be guilty of unbelief regarding God, and his confession of the unity of God would become invalid.³⁰⁹

Further, we detailed the rights of God and why those rights are important to Muslims. God himself explains to Muslims through

308 Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, *Sahih Muslim*, trans. (Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, n. d.), vol. 2, 703.

309 Daniel Brown, "Islamic Ethics in Comparative Perspective," in *Muslim World v.* 89, no. 2 (April 1999): 181-192, quoting *Wasayyat Abi Hanifa*, art. 6, cited in A. J. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*. (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), p. 126.

Prophet Muhammad what He wants and how He should be worshipped and related to. Several *Qur'anic* verses are quoted to substantiate the claim that God deserves to be worshipped and Muslims must accept that Muhammad was the last messenger of God. Muslims take his interpretation of the revealed message, the *Qur'an*, seriously. Thus, whatever additional information Prophet Muhammad provided by way of explanation and interpretation of the *Qur'an* ought to be accepted as long as it is authentic. Disrespecting Prophet Muhammad and rejecting his verdicts is tantamount to rejecting the holy *Qur'an* itself, for it is only through Muhammad that Muslims know about God and the message He sent.

After rendering their duties to God and Prophet Muhammad, Muslims must also fulfill duties to their parents, through whom they come to this life. Parents have duties toward their children too. While children respect and show gratitude to their parents because of what they offered them when they were young, the parents are strongly admonished to protect, provide for them and educate them about the religion of Islam. They equip them with the tools necessary for their future endeavors by teaching them moral values, respect for God, their parents, for themselves and for all human beings. As they have no right to inflict harm on others, they have no right to do harm to themselves, for their lives are gifts from God. Islam also requires that people treat their fellow human beings with kindness and respect. They wish and love for them what they wish and love for themselves. A good and practical Muslim, Prophet Muhammad taught his disciples, is one who causes no harm to himself or to others through his deeds or words, through his hands or tongue. Therefore, drinking or eating or doing anything which is potentially harmful to oneself, societal life, or the health of the community is prohibited in Islam.

The range of morality in Islam is so inclusive and interactive that it combines faith in God, religious rites, spiritual observances, social conduct, decision making, intellectual pursuits, and habits of consumption, manners of speech, and all other aspects of human life. Because morality is such an integral part of Islam, the moral tone underlies all the passages of the *Qur'an* and

the moral teachings are repeatedly stressed in various contexts throughout the Holy Book.³¹⁰

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310 Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1975), p. 43.

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Chapter XI

Islam and Other Religions

Introduction

Say: O people of the book, come to common terms as between us and you that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God. If then they turn back, say ye: 'Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims bowing to God's Will.' (*Qur'an* 3:36)

Islam is one of the world's religions that recognizes Judaism and Christianity as revealed religions. Islam makes reference to previous prophets mentioned in the Old and New Testaments in an attempt to seek support from them and claim implicitly that the message brought by Islam is essentially identical with the messages of earlier prophets. The *Qur'an* contains several verses which are full of praise of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mary. An entire chapter of the *Qur'an* is devoted to Mary. Jesus' name is mentioned twenty five times as *Isa* and eleven times as messiah. Mary's name is mentioned thirty-four times while Muhammad's name only appears four times. Of course there are many references in the *Qur'an* to Muhammad that do not include his name. The references to Jesus' names show that Muhammad and his followers were acquainted with the stories of Christianity. Many Christians, even today, are unaware that Muslims have knowledge of Christianity. They

are often astonished when they are informed that the *Qur'an* accords these other prophets great respect. Many Jews and Christians, on the other hand, including some prominent leaders and theologians of these religions such as Martin Luther and Thomas Aquinas, have shown little respect for Muhammad and Islam despite what they read about him. Some have even felt obligated to undermine Muhammad in an attempt to prove their own religion's superiority over Islam because Islam is a rival religion. This attitude stems from inadequate knowledge and a very basic misunderstanding of Islam and the *Qur'an*. The competition to win followers may be responsible for this strained relationship between Islam and Christianity. Both religions are exclusive traditions; both struggle to win the hearts of those they think they are unbelievers, that is, those who need to be saved. Modern scholars have criticized this aggressive approach of forcing one's belief on others. They appeal that others should be left alone to choose whatever belief they want.

Muslims and Christians strongly believe in the universality of their messages; both claim to have a monopoly on the truth (exclusive concept). Some Christians claim that anyone who does not believe in Jesus as the Savior will not be saved, regardless of whatever else he does. Salvation, Christians argue, is a gift; it can only be attained through faith in Jesus. Saint Cyprian (d. 258) argued that nothing less than full membership in the Catholic Church would avail a heretic of salvation, not even the baptism of blood. He then quotes Jesus' word in Matthew 12:30, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."³¹¹ Participants at the Council of Florence (1438-1445) also stated that only Christians will be saved.

The Holy Roman Church believes, professes, and preaches that no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not just pagans, but also Jews or heretics or schismatics, can become partakes of eternal life; but they will go to the everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels unless before the end of life, they are joined to the Church.³¹²

311 Mahmoud Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflicts," in *The Muslim World*, vol. 79 (Jan. 1989): 25-45.

312 From the Council of Florence (1438-1445) "Decree for the Jacobites, *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English* Translation, ed. And trans.,

Of course, the Catholic Church has since modified this claim. The Church declared in Vatican II that there can be salvation for adherents of other traditions. Regardless of the Church's decree and pronouncement, many Christians today strongly believe that it is only through Jesus that human beings can attain salvation and have eternal life in the next world.

Islam also claims an exclusive conception of religion. It declares that the only acceptable religion by God is Islam (as finally brought by Muhammad) and he who does not follow it will be among the losers in the Day of Judgment (*Qur'an* 3:19, 85). Many Muslims fervently believe that Christians and Jews must follow Islam if they are to be saved. This way of thinking has been supported by a number of *Hadith* in the Islamic tradition.³¹³ Ironically, non-believers like Africans and Hindus do not believe in salvation at all and never claim that they are searching for it. To these polytheistic traditions, nothing was lost in the beginning and as such they are not searching for any rescue.

Christianity and Islam: The Beginning of the Relationship

Bernard Lewis, an Islamic scholar, eloquently describes the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the medieval age. He says:

The Europeans (Christians and Jews) and the Muslims, in contrast, knew – or thought they knew – a great deal about each other. They had been neighbors since the very beginnings of Islam in the seventh century – neighbors in constant contact and communication, often as rivals, sometimes as enemies, and with attitudes toward each other formed and confirmed by centuries of experience and, for the Europeans, of fear. ... Europe and Islam were old acquaintances, intimate enemies,

John F. Clarkson, John H. Edwards, William J. Kelley and John J. Welch (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), p. 78 [#165].

313 *Ibid.*

whose continuing conflict derived a special virulence from their shared origins and common aims.³¹⁴

When Muhammad declared himself the prophet of Islam in 610 C. E. at Mecca, there were few Christians living in Arabia. Some of them called themselves Christians and a few were known as *Hanifi* (the Upright People). They had knowledge of the revealed religion of God and prided themselves on being superior to Bedouin Arabs, who were animists and polytheists because they did not possess any written scripture.

Muhammad's contact with Christians actually began right from the birth of Islam. When he received his first revelation at Mount Hira in Mecca, he felt frightened when he was spoken to by the angel. He came home to his wife Khadijah, who calmed him and assured him of her support. Seeing that Muhammad was not fully satisfied with her response, she took him to her cousin *Waraqah bin Naufal*, who is described in Muslim history as a Christian or a *hanif* (a Puritan or One who is Upright) with knowledge of the scripture, the Bible. *Waraqah*, after listening carefully to what Muhammad narrated about his experience on Mount Hira, told him that if he were telling the truth, he would be the awaited messiah, the prophet. He added that the message Muhammad received was similar to that received by Moses and Jesus. He assured Muhammad of his support as long as he was alive but warned that the Quraysh would reject and exile him. Muhammad was astonished to hear that he would be exiled. *Waraqah* told him that no Prophet had come to his people with truth without being rejected.

Muhammad began preaching his message at Mecca and, eventually, he was rejected. The Quraysh, his tribe, feared that his message was a threat to their religious and political systems. When they failed to stop Muhammad through persuasion and bargaining, they resorted to violence and began persecuting his followers. The persecution became so unbearable that Muhammad gave permission to his followers to seek refuge in another city. They were exiled to *Abyssinia* in Ethiopia, where they were well received by Negus, the Christian king. This is considered the first migration in Islam. Muslims stayed in Ethiopia peacefully; some spent a few months there before returning to Mecca,

others spent several years there. As a consequence of their acculturation in Abyssinia, however, some Muslims became Christians and never returned to Mecca.

During their stay in Abyssinia, the Quraysh sent their envoy to King Negus and asked him to return the Muslims to Mecca. Negus arranged for a meeting between the Muslims and the Quraysh, who alleged that Muslims were antagonistic to Christianity for their refusal to accept Jesus as the Lord. Muslims, Christians and Quraysh ambassadors attended the meeting and the King himself presided over it. Both Muslim and Quraysh ambassadors presented their cases. Muslims were declared victorious in the debate and thus were granted permanent asylum in Abyssinia. They were neither tortured nor persecuted by Christians; they were accommodated, respected and given the space to practice their Islam.

Muhammad's attitude toward Christians in the early stages of Islam was cordial and respectful. He appreciated their moral values and devotion, as is expressed in the *Qur'an* 2:62; 5:82-84; 57:27. Muhammad attempted to win Christians to Islam as he affirmed the common ground between both religions. There was no confrontation at that stage. But as the opposition of the Meccan people to Muhammad hardened, numerous verses were revealed to Muhammad about earlier messengers and prophets like Hud, Moses, Abraham, and Salih of the ancient Arabs. This was to relay to the people of Mecca the serious consequences of their disbelief in Muhammad. The *Qur'anic* reference to other prophets seeks support from them for its own claim that the message brought by Islam is essentially identical with the messages of earlier prophets. The implication was that if the Quraysh failed to acknowledge Muhammad's message, they would receive the same punishment as received by the followers of those prophets who rejected God's message, disobeyed God, and continued in their wrong doing. The rejection of Muhammad by the Quraysh was terse and the persecution continued. Eventually, he decided to migrate to Medina; he also recognized that the Jews and Christians would not accept him. But before his travel, he made contact with the Medinan people, some of whom were Jews and Christians.

On his arrival in Medina, he concluded a pact with the Jews, Christians, and Bedouin Arabs to defend Medina against any attack

314 Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 17.

from the Quraysh from Mecca. Initially, again, he treated both Jews and Christians kindly and did not lose hope that they may one day be converted. Soon he recognized that they would not follow him despite his assertion that God's religion is one even though the institutionalized expression of each religion varied due to the different communities to which each prophet was sent. Nonetheless, he continued to receive revelation. Some of the verses talked about Christianity, which he had to tell his followers. Many considered this to be an attack upon Christianity and Christians, especially those verses that spoke of the denial of Jesus as the "Son," his lordship, his crucifixion, and the doctrine of trinity. Some scholars perceive these attacks to have been politically oriented, particularly after Muhammad's conflicts with the Jews and his victory over the polytheists of Mecca. Other scholars assume that these attacks on Christianity were a deliberate refusal of Christianity and an attempt to present Islam as a unique and purely monotheistic religion.

They say become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided to salvation. Say thou, nay, I would rather the religion of Abraham the true, and he joined not gods with God. (*Qur'an* 2:135).

To Muhammad, Islam was a reform of both Christianity and Judaism, an idea both traditions rejected. They claimed to have monopolies on the truth and that only their followers will enter paradise. "And they say: None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. These are their desires. Say: produce your proof if ye are truthful." (*Qur'an* 2:111). On that ground, they rejected Islam and affirmed that only Jews and Christians would go to heaven. "Neither Jews nor Christians will be happy with you until you follow their religion; say, Guidance is God's guidance." (*Qur'an* 2:120).

By the time Muhammad died in 632 C. E., the relationship between Islam and Christianity was strained, as the *Qur'an* contains several verses denying the basic tenets of Christianity: the divinity of Jesus, the trinity, original sin, the crucifixion, and the authenticity of the Bible itself. At the same time, before his death, Muhammad made a treaty with the Christians of Najran; the latter became protected groups (*dhimmi*) after their defeat in the battles of Mu'ta in 628 C. E. and Tabuk in 630 C. E. Muhammad allowed them to practice their religion. They may

have been forced to pay a tax poll to the Muslims as well; many were retained in their public positions and the monks, bishops, and hermits continued to hold their religious positions. The great effect here was that the Arabs, who had been perceived as illiterate and uncivilized, became leaders and decision-makers. While many Christians welcomed Muslim authority by considering the change of government a relief from the oppression and heavy taxes levied on them by their Christian leaders, many others felt dispossessed by Muslim authority and felt like second-class citizens in their own country. However, as pointed out by Montgomery Watt, there was a religious vacuum in the Arab world at that time that the Christians could not fill and that led to the acceptance of Muhammad and his message.³¹⁵

In Medina, some Christians converted to Islam. Muhammad's success in uniting the Arabs and putting them on the map of the world by conquering them was due to Muhammad's explaining his message as he deemed fit, as well as his claim to be a prophet and statesman simultaneously. He perceived Islam as both religion and politics and drew no line between the two. He paid great attention to both religion and the social political affairs of his community.

We would say that the new religious movement (Islam) presented itself successfully in at least three principal ways: as a religious purification movement of polytheism, as a religious reform movement of Judaism and Christianity, and as the proclamation of the true universal monotheistic religion in its Arabian form with a complete socio-political order. All three tenets, as well as the fact the movement had now established itself with its own power base, affected Muhammad's attitude toward the Christians in the North [of Arabia].³¹⁶

On the other hand, the modern Christian scholar W. M. Watt says that the perception of Christianity portrayed by Muhammad in the *Qur'an* was erroneous. He argues that some of the information given

315 W. M. Watt, *Muslim - Christian Encounters* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 28.

316 Jacques Waardenburg, ed., *Muslim Perceptions of other Religions: A Historical Survey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 15-16.

in the *Qur'an* about the birth of Jesus is inaccurate because it was not mentioned in the four gospels. To him, the divinity of Jesus and his crucifixion are denied in the *Qur'an* despite the fact that they are at the core of Christian beliefs. Christians do not accept the allegation that the Bible is not authenticated or that it is corrupt, as alleged by Muslims.³¹⁷ There may be some Christian biblical scholars today who deny the authenticity of the Bible and also doubt the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.³¹⁸

Islam and Christianity during the Reign of the Four Caliphs

The four caliphs spread Islam throughout the Arabian Peninsula after the death of Muhammad and sent their armies to conquer the Byzantine and Persian empires. Fighting between Muslims and Christians did not stop until the Christians were defeated. Although Muslim leaders imposed taxes on them, they did not force them to convert to the religion of Islam. The conquered peoples were allowed to retain and practice their beliefs. They were allowed to manage their cities and conduct their businesses as usual. They played great roles in the day-to-day affairs of the Muslims. They were not allowed to join the Muslim army; rather, they paid poll taxes to Muslim authority. In this sense, their activities were curtailed so as not to prevent Muslims from expanding and spreading Islam to others. Waardenburg summarizes how Muslims treated the Christians. He says:

Non-Muslims are judged by Muslims primarily in light of what is accepted by the latter as revelation (i.e., the *Qur'an*), hence is a religious light. This revelation is considered not only to provide the format standards and categories by which non-Muslims are to be evaluated but also to provide substantial knowledge about them and their religious beliefs. Certain earlier revelations in the course of history, preceding that of Muhammad, which were not fully heard or widely

respected but are at the origin of all monotheistic religion, are recognized as valid. There is recognition of a kind of 'primordial religion' (*Ureligion*), a primal and fundamental consciousness of God (*fitra*), which has been implanted in each human being at birth. Humanity can choose to follow this consciousness or neglect it. Islam is the true expression of this eternal, primordial religion. A non-religious person or polytheist is not recognized and should become a believer. Jews and Christians, Zoroastrians and Sabians can continue to live according to the beliefs of their respective, recognized religions, but within Muslim territory (*dar al-Islam*) they must submit to the given Muslim political authority and, without coercion, be encouraged to become believers.³¹⁹

Muslim-Christian Relations during the Umayyad and Abbasid Empires

During the reign of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, encounters between Muslims and Christians were cordial, for they lived together side-by-side for centuries. Nearly all the territories that fell under Muslim rule were previously inhabited and occupied by either Persians or Roman peoples. Nevertheless, the relationship was relatively amicable and represented cooperation among them and the exchange of ideas. They engaged in debate and religious dialogue and worked together as citizens and members of the same community. However, resentment and hatred for Islam were deeply rooted in the minds of some Christian leaders and theologians, who perceived Islam as a heathen religion and Muslims as invaders. They considered Islam a heresy and thus a major threat to Christianity. They developed theological methods to defend Christianity and reject Islam. Such deeply rooted antagonistic attitudes led to the Crusade wars toward the end of 11th century. Christian Crusaders conquered Jerusalem in 1099 C. E. and brutally massacred Muslims and Jews. Nonetheless, after nearly one hundred years, Jerusalem was re-conquered by *Salahudeen* (Saladin) in 1187 C. E.

319 Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions*, p. 19.

317 Watt, *ibid.*, pp. 25-29.

318 For more information, reference is made to any Encyclopaedia of Religion under the topic of crucifixion, resurrection, and trinity.

Contrary to what the Christians did to Muslims when they conquered Jerusalem, Salahudeen did not massacre his opponents, he allowed them to stay and permitted Christians and Jews to practice their religions. Eventually, Jerusalem remained under Muslim authority for more than 1200 years until 1948 when the British in collaboration with the U.S. gave Zionists the right to establish the State of Israel and thus put the Palestinians under a state of occupation, which continues until today.

Waardenburg states that the religious polemics between Muslims and Christians in the medieval period were not so different from those from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, for Muslims still had little knowledge of Christianity at that time.³²⁰ He suggests that Muslim theologians based their critique of Christianity upon information they got from the *Qur'an*, which was basically the accusation of attributing a son to God, that Christians and Jews falsified their scriptures and that Jesus was incarnated God. Muslims were accused of being unknowledgeable of many doctrinal developments in Christianity. Both Muslims and Christians used philosophical tools to substantiate their claims and discredit the views of the other. Practically, little was achieved in bridging the theological gap between the two groups. Yet there were no persecutions from the 11th century to the end of the 18th century. Rather, during the Abbasid period, debates were arranged among Muslim and Christian scholars, which led to the production of a number of polemic books about Muslim-Christian relations.

The Muslim treatises show all the features that consistently pervade Islamic polemical literature against Christianity: the denial of the trinity and of Jesus' divinity, proofs of Muhammad's prophetic qualities, including those drawn from the Bible, contradictions and inconsistencies in the Old and New Testaments, proofs of Muhammad's prophesies and miracles, evidence of the dignity and superiority of Islam, and the condemnation of the ethical and cult practices of Christianity on the grounds that they are just as faulty as Christian beliefs.³²¹

However, scholars attribute the rapid spread of Islam and its acceptance by different cultures after Muhammad and during the Arab conquests to the ways the Arab Muslims dealt with the people in the conquered territories and to the corruption of Christian officials in the seventh and eighth centuries. Ovey Mohammad argues that the Arabs

retained the systems they found in operation in conquered territories and did not impose their culture on them but accepted cultural diversity within the empire. He cites examples of how the Persians, who were neither Arabs nor Semites, accepted the new religion of Islam. They were permitted to continue to speak and write in the Persian language, which can be contrasted to how Western imperialists treated them during the colonial period. The latter imposed their culture and languages on Africans, Asians, and Arabs when these countries fell under their occupation.³²² He adds that the acceptance of Islam was also due to many factors: Muslim emphasis on deeds rather than on creed, the simplicity of the basic doctrines of Islam and its logical approach, the flexibility of the right to interpret the laws of God in different ways by different schools of law. They accepted those interpretations as legitimate and admired the respect that each school accords to others' decisions, and the policy of not forcing Islam on everyone at the point of the sword, as did Christian leaders in Spain and Jerusalem.

Muslim - Christian Relations Between 1800-1950

Islam during this period witnessed a terrible defeat by the imperial West, socially, politically, and technologically. Many Muslim countries were conquered and colonized by the West, which forcibly exerted its power over Muslims and imposed its culture and languages upon people in the conquered territories. The countries not directly subjugated were forced to give up some of their traditions and culture, such as what happened in Turkey. The West rejected some Islamic traditions and abandoned the Arabic language as the official language in the region. People there adopted Western laws and ways of life, yet Turkey, for example, is seen today as a weak country. It is neither fully recognized by the West as a developed country nor by Muslim countries as an Islamic state because of its divorce from Islamic traditions instituted by Kamal Ataturk in 1924. Ataturk abolished the caliphate and dismantled the Ottoman Islamic Empire in 1928 and declared Turkey a secular state. Since then, Turkey has been subject to Western cultural dominance to the extent that they recently denied a veiled Muslim from being a member of its parliament.

322 Ovey N. Mohammad. *Muslim - Christian Relations: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), p. 30.

320 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

321 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

During this period too, even though Islam remained the religion of the majority in Muslim countries, the West brought Christianity and put it on equal level with Islam. Thus, the concept of the protected minority (*dhimmi*) that was applied to Jews and Christians was abolished. The colonial West established many Christian institutions: schools, clinics, and vocational centers. The West also imposed the study of European languages and of Christianity. Mission work was allowed and patronized by Western governments, which gave protection to Christian missionaries, supported their work and supplied them with financial aid. They made ceaseless attempts to convert Muslims and uproot Islamic teachings in Muslim countries. They did not support the local Islamic schools, which led to the closure of many of them. They equipped modern schools patterned on Western models with all different kinds of facilities. Eventually, many Islamic schools died natural deaths for lack of financial support from the colonial government, and those that survived could not compete with Western schools and colleges, which offered science subjects. Islamic subjects were relegated to lower levels and taught by untrained teachers. Those who earned degrees in Islamic disciplines found it very difficult to find reliable and permanent jobs.

For the first time in their history, the Muslim majority found themselves defensive of their religion and values in their own countries. They were face-to-face with Christianity and its organizations and missionary teams, who were well-trained in converting Muslims to Christianity. While Muslims had lost ground politically, militarily and socially, many still adhered to Islam and insisted on defending it. Nevertheless, there were a few scholars who continued to write and criticize Christianity. Among them were Syed Ahmad Khan of India, Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanawi of Iran, Shaykh Muhammad Abdu of Egypt and his student Shaykh Rashid Rida of Syria. Their criticism of Christianity centered on denying the sonship of Jesus and his divinity as God, his incarnation, and on denying the concept of original sin. These scholars used the same proof employed by medieval Muslim scholars and theologians.

In reality, the relationship between Muslims and Christians became strained and suspicious. Yet, it provided ample opportunity for both to come to know and understand one another, an opportunity that they

did not have before. Further, during this period, Christian scholars and missionaries mounted an intensive attack on Islam, its culture, civilization and values. A group of scholars known as Orientalists were employed and used in different ways to study Islam and its peoples to point out the weaknesses of Islam and Muslims. Eventually, Muslim countries were divided into pieces and artificial boundaries were created to ease their governance, especially in East and West Africa through the Berlin Conference of 1894-95.

After 1950, many or nearly all Muslim countries under Western colonialization won their independence and their attitude towards Christianity changed drastically. In most countries, Christian mission work was stopped or greatly reduced. Muslims linked colonialism with Christianity and both were perceived as tools of Western imperialism and the exploitation of Third World countries. From the 1950s on, many students from all parts of different Muslim countries traveled to Western countries for their higher education. They interacted with Christians on a daily basis. Such interaction gave them ample chance to recognize the other and evaluate their own religions. In the beginning, those who returned home became secular leaders with strong alliances with the West and little respect for their own culture and religion, Islam, which they thought was the cause of their backwardness. It did not take long before these people recognized that the secular national ideologies they borrowed from Europe, America and Russia were no longer meeting the needs of their nations and peoples. Both socialism and capitalism, which the West planted in occupied countries, failed woefully. The application and implementation of capitalism and socialism kept Muslim countries fully dependent on foreign superpowers. They became victims of the Cold War between America and Russia. They reverted back to Islam to find solutions to their problems.

It was hard for Muslims to survive because of the insurmountable pressure exerted on them by foreign powers, foreign culture, and intensive missionary work, geared toward poor Muslim populations through the modern tools of communication: radio, TV, satellite, movies, etc. Nevertheless, Muslim immigrants had the opportunity to interact with Christians in Europe and America; a few students took courses in Christianity during their studies in the West. Being the minority in Christian countries enabled them to develop a unique

self-awareness and united their efforts to retain their Islamic identity, promote Islamic values and culture, and invite their hosts to Islam. Of course, some felt threatened by Western culture; many others were able to resist Western secularization and retained their Islamic identities, despite being victims of persecution and derision at times.

During this period too Muslims wrote books that criticized Christianity and circulated them in Islamic and Western countries. Some Muslim writings³²³ are addressed specifically against such Christian doctrines as the sonship of Jesus, the incarnation, the trinity and the Bible as revelation.³²³ A few other Muslim authors wrote positively about Jesus by portraying him as a great Prophet of God who did the will of God on earth. They also responded to the Christian critique of Islam using the same logical tools employed by Christians. Towards the end of the 20th century, both Muslims and Christians began religious dialogue, which continues until today. Yet, there are many scholars among Muslims and Christians who are very skeptical about religious dialogue; they find no benefit in it. Nevertheless, dialogue between these two groups has enhanced mutual understanding of both traditions and helped participants appreciate and respect one another. Initially, though, the goal of dialogue was to win souls; the reality has been that both parties have grown and matured and largely moved away from the selfish end of winning converts. Both incline toward cooperation and peaceful coexistence as well as the promotion of equality and justice among all human beings.

Waardenburg adds that the main Muslim argument against Christianity in the past and at present remains the same. These are the allegations of the forgery of Christian scripture, the assumption that there are errors of thought in Christian doctrine, and errors in religious practices. He explains that according to the *Qur'an*, Muslims allege that Christians adopted a few Gospels suited their religious leaders' interests and reject other Gospels which are presumed to be inauthentic. They also allege that what was finally included in the scripture was what the disciples of Jesus remembered about him.

With regard to the errors of thought and doctrines, Muslims strongly reject the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus as the living God on earth. To Muslims, Jesus was a humble human being and a

great prophet who performed many miracles. It is inconceivable in Muslim thought that Jesus can simultaneously be a human, who can suffer death, and a God, who cannot suffer death. Muslims argue that Jesus being born through Mary implied that God had been in need of a human in order to carry out His will. To Muslims, God has no need of any human being in anything. Whenever He wanted anything to be, He says to it: be and it becomes. If Jesus were God, he would have defended himself against his opponents. To be God is to be the Creator, the Lord of all creatures. He would not have said, when he was about to be killed: "My Lord, my Lord, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) Muslims cannot conceive a God who is baptized by a human being, such as Jesus was by John, the Baptist. Muslims also reject the doctrine of the trinity, which they understand as three gods in one or as one God who manifests himself in three ways of being: the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit. They cannot fully comprehend the concept of the trinity logically. This is also difficult for many Christians. The idea of three gods in one or one God who manifests himself in three ways is foreign to Muslim comprehension. Its rejection is based on the text of the *Qur'an*. They believe that such a notion conflicts with the doctrine of the unity of God (*tauheed*) in Islam and, therefore, believing in trinity is tantamount to making association with God, which is termed as *shirk*. They liken the miraculous birth of Jesus without father to the miraculous creation of Adam without father and mother (*Qur'an* 3:59).

With regard to the doctrine of salvation through Jesus, Muslims assume that God had the power to save Jesus without allowing him to experience the brutal death at the hands of the Roman. Muslims think that God does not have to suffer humiliation through crucifixion before He can forgive sins or save others. On the other hand, if only those who believe in Jesus are saved, what happens to the other four billion people who do not believe in Jesus or even heard about him? Are all condemned to eternal life in the hell fire? The belief in the monopoly of salvation through one tradition raises serious questions about God's justice and his real love for His creatures. For how can a loving God condemn the majority of His creatures to eternal punishment merely because they did not hear about or follow Jesus?

323 Waardenburg, *Muslim Perceptions*, p. 88.

Another Muslim allegation is that there are many rituals and innovations which Christians introduced into Christianity after Jesus, such as the veneration of saints, particularly Mary, and the incorporation of some pagan rituals.³²⁴ Christian theologians refute these allegations. They repeatedly affirm that Muslims lack a proper understanding of Christianity and that the sources they rely upon in their *Qur'anic* challenges against Christianity are not authentic. Since both religions lean towards missionary activities, the rivalry to win new souls continues.

In general, however, Muslim treatment of Christians in their territories was kinder than Christians for Muslims, for they have shown a great deal of tolerance toward Christians since the beginning of Islam. Even though there are rules stipulated by Islamic law in the 7th and 8th centuries on how Christians should be treated as protected people (*dhimmi*), in practice, these laws were not enforced, and Christians and Jews were fairly treated and accommodated, employed and at times, assigned high and strategic positions in Muslim administrations. They were considered People of the Book who also believe in God. There has been occasional hostility stemming from Muslim fear about the expansion and influence of Christians in their territories, especially during the reign of Caliph Al-Mansoor in Baghdad in the late 10th century. The cultural and extremist attacks on Christians and other faiths do not represent the opinions of the majority of Muslims or the religious doctrine of Islam. Still, the kind treatment of Christians by Muslims was not reciprocated by Christians when they conquered Muslim lands in Jerusalem in 1099 C. E and Spain in 1492 C. E.

By 1492, they (Christians under the leadership of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castile) had recovered Granada, the last stronghold of Muslim occupation. With that conquest the struggle for control of Andalusia, which had continued between Muslims and Christians for some eight centuries, ended with a victory for Christianity and control of the Iberian Peninsula. The takeover was followed by intense effort at conversion, accompanied by translation of the Christian scripture and liturgy into Arabic. Soon baptisms were

no longer optional but forced, and by the turn of the fifteenth century not only in Granada but also though Castile, Muslims had to choose between conversion, emigration or death.³²⁵

There are still some Christians today who have limited knowledge about Islam and Muslims; they perceive Muslims as pagans, heretics, anti-Christ, and label them uncivilized people. Some even suggest Muslims may have come from another planet.

However strong Muslim allegations against Christians may have been, Christians point the same fingers at Muslims by thoroughly analyzing the flaws in Islam and the alleged mistakes found in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, which are regarded as the primary sources of the Islamic religion. Western Orientalists have subjected Islamic scriptures to intensive critical examination over the years. They claim to have found numerous mistakes, inconsistencies, and contradictions just as Muslims claim to have found mistakes in the Bible. The irony is that both Muslims and Christians are playing a game of "our religion is the only true religion while other religions are fraught with errors and mistakes." This is a double standard, argues Goddard.

The most fundamental area in which double standards are applied, however, is in Christians' and Muslims' assessment of each other's faiths. In particular, what is involved here is a recurring tendency in both communities to compare the ideals of their own faith with the realities of the other. Christians, in other words, are adept at comparing the wonderful ideals of the Christian faith with the painful realities of Islamic societies, and Muslims are equally expert at highlighting the obvious problems in societies influenced by the Christian faith while pointing to never-implemented Islamic ideals as the solution to these problems.³²⁶

325 Jane I. Smith, "Islam and Christianity: Historical, Cultural, and Religious Interaction from the Seventh to the Fifteenth Centuries," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed., John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 344.

326 Hugh Goddard, *Christian & Muslims: From Double Standards to Mutual Understanding* (Surrey, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995), p. 8.

324 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Islam and Judaism

Islam from its inception recognized Judaism as a revealed religion established by Moses and has a strong link to Abraham, who was the father of monotheism. When Prophet Muhammad first received his revelation, there were no Jews in Mecca. Muhammad hardly had any contact with Jews until he reached Medina, despite the fact that references are made to various Jewish prophets in the *Qur'an* to draw the attention of the Arabs to the fact that the message of Muhammad was identical to the previous messages brought by earlier prophets. Upon his immigration to Medina in 622 C. E., Muhammad found a large Jewish community. He had contact with them and strove to win them to his new religion of Islam, which he believed was a continuation of the Jewish tradition. He miscalculated. The initially cordial relations between Muhammad and the Jewish community did not last long. In the beginning, Muhammad extended his love to them and concluded a pact - a peace treaty with the Jews and other Bedouin Arabs - to defend Medina against any unforeseeable attack from the Quraysh. Muhammad treated the Jews as valuable co-religionists, whom he granted and guaranteed equal rights as believers. Article #25 of the Constitution of Medina reads:

And verily the Jews of Banu Awf shall be considered a community (*Ummah*) along with the believers. For the Jews their religion and for the Muslims their religion, be one client or original member of the tribe, but whosoever shall be guilty of oppression or violation (of this treaty) shall put to trouble none but his own person and the members of his house. And verily the Jews of Banu al-Harith shall have the same rights as the Jews of Banu Awf.³²⁷

In Medina, Muslims lived together with Jews as neighbors. Muslims used to face Jerusalem in their prayer, like the Jews, and there were some practices common to both traditions, such as fasting during the *Ashura*, the tenth day of Arabic calendar, *Muharram*, and permission

327 Muhammad Hamidullah, *The First Written Constitution in the World*, 3rd ed. (Lahore, Pakistan: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf Press, 1975), p. 34-35, article # 25 and 27.

to eat Jewish food and marry their women. Also, some Islamic rituals are similar to those of the Jews. However, that cordiality was short-lived. After three years of peaceful coexistence, the Jews breached the pact they had concluded with Muhammad by collaborating with the Quraysh to fight Muslims within Medina, particularly at the Battle of the Pit (*ghazwatul Khandaq*) in 627 C. E. Muslim historians affirmed that Muhammad asked the Jews to withdraw their assistance to the Quraysh but the Jews insisted on providing aid to them and also advising them as to what to do against the Muslims. When the Battle of the Pit ended, Prophet Muhammad fought the Jews for breaching their peace treaty and for their collaboration with the pagans of Mecca. The Jews were expelled from Medina. This marked the beginning of great tension between them.

Eventually, there were many verses revealed to Muhammad in the *Qur'an* referring to the nature of the Jews and Judaism as a religion. Some of these verses were positive toward the Jews but many were negative. Muhammad initially trusted the Jews and hoped that they would follow his new religion. He did not receive the support he expected from them. They failed to recognize him as a prophet; they rejected his affiliation to Moses and Abraham, and denied the divine origin of his message. On a political level, the Jews did not accept Muhammad's leadership and the reform he brought despite having been called upon to live according to the teaching of the new revelation, the *Qur'an*.³²⁸

Muslim biographers reported that before the arrival of Muhammad in Medina, the Jews were about to assume leadership of the Medinan community. The Arab inhabitants of Medina, the Aws and Khazraj, who had originally come from Yemen, were fighting one another and would not accept any Arab tribe as leader. When Muhammad arrived on invitation by the people of Medina themselves, he made settlement among them, united them and converted many of them to Islam. Thus, they surrendered to his leadership and the Jews in Medina lost their bid to govern. Nevertheless, the Jews retained their economic power. It was not long before Muslims and Jews confronted one another and engaged in war. By the time Muhammad died in 632 C. E., the Jews had lost their position and status and were expelled for instigating the Quraysh

328 Waardenburg, p. 6.

against Muhammad. And since they did not have any government to support them, they scattered in Arabia and other places; they never had a state for themselves until 1948 when the British government gave them part of Palestine, which was then under British occupation. After the death of Muhammad, Muslim leaders also distrusted the Jews.³²⁹ They treated them as protected citizens (*dhimmi*); Jews could not propagate their religion publicly or join the military. Jews for their part did not invite others to embrace Judaism because they perceived of themselves as the chosen children of God and thus felt superior to others.

During the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, Jews in Muslim territories were treated well and allowed to practice their religion. Muslim authorities recruited and entrusted them with some of the highest civil positions in the Islamic state. They were able to regroup and flourish again. They developed culturally and educationally and were influenced by Islamic culture and civilization. Both Muslims and Jews engaged in religious dialogue and scholarly debates, which were patronized by the Abbasid leaders, particularly Caliph al-Mansoor and Caliph Haruna al-Rashid. The Arabic language was the medium of communication at that time and eventually both cultures enriched the other, borrowing went on by both sides. Tension between the two had lessened primarily because Muslims were the rulers and Jews the ruled and minority, so the Jews kept a low profile.

Also, between the 8th and 15th centuries, Muslims and Jews lived peacefully in Spain. They studied, worked, and developed together until Christian leaders drove them away toward the end of the 15th century. In 1492 C. E. in Spain, Muslims and Jews were brutally persecuted by Ferdinand and Isabella; those who were not killed were forced to convert to Christianity or leave Spain.

This was the case for Jews in Iran and the Byzantine Empire, where Zoroastrianism and Christianity, respectively, had been the state religions before Islam. Neither the Zoroastrian nor the Christian state had guaranteed constitutional rights of religious minorities

as was the case in Islam, where these rights were laid down in the Koran, i.e., in divine law. The situation of the Jews in these two states could do nothing but improve after the Arab conquest. The same was true in Spain. The Visigoths had severely limited the rights of the Jews; not a single synod convened that did not demand measures to force their conversion. Here, too, the Arabs were truly liberators and, in a certain respect, a flourishing culture developed in the interaction between Arabs and Jews.³³⁰

Main Muslim Arguments Against Judaism As a Religion

At the beginning of his career as a messenger of God, Muhammad acknowledged the existence and validity of the Jewish religion. He affirmed that Islam was not a new religion, but a reform and completion of previous revelations sent by God to human beings. But as time went on, as the Jews began to reject Muhammad's message, they were blamed for not following the true religion of Islam. The accusations of Islam against them are of three kinds: accusation of forgery of the Jewish scripture, accusation of finding errors in their thought and doctrines, and accusation of errors in their religious practices.³³¹ These accusations are similar to those charged against Christians, but the area of emphasis is different.

With regard to the forgery of the text, Muslims assume that there was a historical forgery in the Old Testament due to the improper transmission of the Law of Moses. The Mosaic laws were proclaimed anew by Ezra after their return from Babylon to Canaan. Muslims claim that these laws are not in accord with the laws as established by Moses. There are allegations that some texts were added to the Torah, while others were removed or not applied, such as the law of capital punishment. Jewish scholars charge Muslims of lacking adequate knowledge about Judaism to refute these allegations. As Waardenburg asserts, Muslims do not recognize the books of the Prophet and the books of Wisdom as part of the Old Testament because those books

329 For more details, see Heribert Busse, *Islam, Judaism, and Christianity: Theological and Historical Affiliation* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), pp. 18-20.

330 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

331 Waardenburg, pp. 54-56.

were lost. They allege also that some interpretations are mere corruptions of the scripture itself, which render the Hebrew Bible unauthentic as stated in the *Qur'an* 9:30-31; 5:13, 44-46; 2:90-96; 4:46.³³² Muslim scholars also blame Jews for its exclusive claim of being the chosen children of God, "which has led to the wrong assumption that the Jews are superior to other peoples."³³³

With regard to the allegation of errors of religious practices, reference is made to the notion of God having a rest on Sabbath day after the creation of heaven and earth, as narrated in Genesis. "Keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest," says Waardenburg "could not have been among God's prescriptions. The whole idea that God had to have a rest after the creation is totally rejected by the Muslims who thought that having a rest is a sign of weakness. To Muslims, God is Omnipotent; whenever He wants something to be, He says to it: Be, and it becomes. The powerful God does not need any rest, argue the Muslims."

We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in six days, nor did any sense of weariness touch us. (*Qur'an* 50:38).

The Jews dispute these allegations and reject them. Despite being expelled from Arabia, they were treated well compared to how they were treated and humiliated by Christians, who actually share scripture with them.

Typically, the negative *Qur'anic* judgments of the Jews did not lead to a form of Muslim 'anti-Semitism' parallel to that found in Europe. Yet, like the Christians, the Jews had to leave Arabia, except from Yemen, and live under the rules and hardship of their status as *Dhimmi*s in Muslim territory.³³⁴

This is not to say that Jews never suffered persecution under Muslim rule or received maltreatment under Muslim authority. They were actually forced at times to live in ghettos, walk barefoot in the cities and put on special dress so as to be identified as Jews. This happened in

Morocco and other places.³³⁵ In general, they were treated well in Spain and Turkey and many other places, as Bernard Lewis asserts.

The Jews had more in common with Islam than Christians did, as regard uncompromised monotheism, for example. ...There were certainly also times and regions where the situation of the Jews was less favorable, but it would be somewhat rash to speak of a fundamentally hostile attitude of Muslims toward Jews. In any case, ethnically and racially grounded anti-Semitism did not exist.³³⁶

Muslims and Jews after the Establishment of the State of Israel

Since the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the relationship between Islam and Judaism or between Muslims and Jews has been strained and continues to deteriorate. Both Muslims and Jews claim that Jerusalem is their sacred land, given to them by God.

Jerusalem, the city of David, home of the Temple and Holy sepulcher, is also the Holy House (bayt al-Maqdis) of the furthest place of worship (al-Aqsa), who precincts God blessed (*Qur'an* 17: 1). Jerusalem was the first qiblat (direction of prayer) for Muslims and a place of pilgrimage. It is the bridge between earth and heaven whose sacred rock served as a stepping-stone for the Prophet Muhammad's celestial journey (*miraj*) to God. Yet Jerusalem, the 'city of peace,' became a powerful symbol for Muslims as it is for Jews and Christians, not only of religious loyalties but also of their historic identity and political power. It is God's holy mountain,

332 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

333 *Ibid.*

334 *Ibid.*, p. 55

335 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

336 *Ibid.*, quoting Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

the hill of Golgotha and the goal of Islam's sacred *hijrah* (migration).³³⁷

Yet, in this holy land of Jerusalem, Arabs and Israelis have fought one another continuously. Millions of lives have been lost, while millions of others have been exiled and live in refugee camps. In the beginning, Arabs fought in the name of nationalism, while Jews fought in the name of religion. It took Arab leaders a long time to recognize that the war was and is still a religious war. The Jews who immigrated to Israel from all parts of the world, particularly from the U.S. and Europe, were returning to Jerusalem to claim their alleged religious sacred land from the Palestinians, whom they perceive as usurpers and invaders. Serious international attempts have been made by the United Nations and other countries to settle the problems between these two countries, but without any success. U. N. resolutions against the atrocities and inhumane treatment of the Palestinians by the Israeli government for more than fifty years have been ignored and disregarded by the State of Israel because of the huge military and financial support it receives from the U.S. However, many Muslims strongly believe that the existence and establishment of the State of Israel is a purely military occupation, which they think will come to an end one day through peaceful negotiation. Both groups should learn and try to live together peacefully and respect one another.³³⁸ It is ironic that Israeli authorities today consider Palestinians illegal residents despite the fact that 85% of those who call themselves Jews today immigrated to Israel, mostly from the U.S. and Europe. The Palestinian claim to be the real original and intended citizens is correct in our view. The situation of Israel is likened to that of an Irish American citizen who calls the Native Indian Americans in North Dakota, like Ojibwe group, illegal residents of the U.S. because the latter hold no American passport. An Ojibwe person does not need a green card to live in America. He is "the American" in all senses of the word. It is ridiculous for the State of Israel to occupy Jerusalem thinking that the Palestinians are not indigenous.

337 Mahmoud Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflicts," in the *Muslim World*, vol. 79 (1989): 25-45.

338 For more information about the Jews and Palestinians, see: Yousef Courbage and Philippe Fargues, *Christians and Jews under Islam* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1997), pp. 153-173.

There are a series of dialogues going on between Muslims and Jews in the U.S. with the aim of promoting mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence between the two. This effort has yet to yield favorable results. It is hard for Israel to survive in an area surrounded by Arabs and Persians who are extremely hostile to the State of Israel. And without the continuous military and financial support of the U.S. government, Israel could not survive. Israel relies heavily on American financial support for its existence and its military supply. This financial support is what keeps Israel in power. Therefore, there has been no substantial progress in Jewish-Muslim dialogue due to the dreadful political situation of the Arabs, who are under Israeli occupation. The Oslo Treaty between the Jews and Palestinians in 1993, which was forced on Israel by the Clinton administration in Washington D.C., has not been implemented by the Jews.³³⁹ The road-map which the Bush administration suggested has only received lip service from the State of Israel. The Israeli government continues to build settlements and the imprisonment of Palestinians continues.

The political conflicts around Israel have made any real Muslim Jewish dialogue practically impossible even in religious matters. Provocative Israel policies—unfortunately endorsed by the United States—in practice have meant that further misunderstanding have been able to develop freely. The way has then become open for anti-Jewish attitude to arise even in Muslim countries, which had kept an open relationship with Israel.³⁴⁰

In addition to what has been said, Jewish scholars often claim that nearly everything in Islam is borrowed from Judaism. To the Jews, the idea of monotheism is borrowed, the Islamic law and codes are borrowed, and many Arabic words are borrowed from the Hebrew language. They even assert that Islamic sciences, culture and civilization triumphed because of Jewish influence and the recruitment of Jewish scientists in Muslim Spain and in Baghdad. While it cannot be denied that

339 Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu had secretly made joke of the Oslo Accord by describing it as words on paper and that he would not let what they agreed upon happen.

340 Waardenburg, p. 90.

Muslims did borrow from all cultures and civilizations they interacted with, the great influence of Islam and Muslim culture on Jews and Judaism should not be underrated. Without Muslim protection of the Jews in Baghdad, Spain, and Turkey, Judaism would have no existence today.³⁴¹

Despite all the above, the Jews who are living in Iran enjoy more respect and accommodation than any Arab ever has under Israeli rule. Iranian Jews lived peacefully in Iran during the reign of Imam Khomeini and still do today.

Islam and Polytheistic Religions

Polytheism is the belief in and worship of many gods and goddesses. African traditional religions, Hinduism, Shinto, and the religions of the Quraysh during the time of the Prophet are all polytheistic religions. These traditions are oral and their adherents do not claim the receipt of any particular written message from gods or goddesses. By their nature, polytheists are tolerant and share very high standards of moral values and ethics, which are drawn from the wisdom of their elders and the saints. These sayings guide them in their daily lives. Polytheistic laws are derived from local customs, but are very flexible in that they are always subject to re-interpretation by their religious leaders, who are held as the spokesmen of gods on earth.

The first encounter of Islam with polytheism was in Mecca. Muhammad was born into the polytheistic tradition of the Quraysh, which venerated many goddesses, especially *al-Lat*, *al-Uzab*, and *al-Manat*. When Muhammad brought Islam, he called his people to surrender to one God, *Allah*. The Quraysh rejected his call and fought him. Finally, Muhammad escaped to Medina, where he converted many people to Islam and established an Islamic state. While the caliphs, the successors to Muhammad, gave due respect to the People of the Book, Jews and Christians, little or no respect was accorded to the Bedouin Arabs who did not convert to Islam. The Muslim army fought them until they submitted to Muslim authority. Within a short time, the Arabian Peninsula was subjugated to Islam through Muslim

conquest. During the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, the treatment of polytheists was not better. The Muslim army conquered Egypt and North Africa and requested that its people pay taxes (*jizya*). However, Islam spread in central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa through peaceful means and the efforts of Sufi movements and Muslim traders who accommodated traditional religions.

Qur'an's Charges Against Polytheism

The *Qur'an* charges that polytheists do not believe in one God, deny life after death, and are engulfed in wrong deeds, such as their disdain for female babies. The Quraysh were accused of making association with God, which is the gravest sin in Islam. To Muhammad, the gods of the Quraysh did not create anything, but were created; they neither give life nor take it away nor do they have the capacity to resurrect life (*Qur'an* 25:2). Thus, they have no useful purposes but deception. So, in the end, polytheists will be losers for they are under the power of Satan, who will disassociate from them.³⁴² The method of the *Qur'an* and Muhammad in discussing the polytheists can be summarized as follows:

The *Qur'an* uses different types of arguments. The arguments of authority remind the polytheists that God is Lord of all creation and all beings and that the Day of Judgment will come. (S 18: 102). The arguments of questioning, as put in the mouth of Ibrahim for instance, show that the polytheists cannot escape from their own self-made traps. Other arguments, often in parable form, are aimed at making the polytheists reconsider their position by reflecting on their unavoidable death and God's power at the moment of resurrection. Sometimes there is a complicated exchange of arguments on both sides as in S. 38: 4-11 or S. 25: 42 where the Meccans admit that Muhammad nearly succeeded in averting them from their gods! There are also arguments which put the polytheists before otherwise unsolvable questions, by means of a paradox

341 I. J. Rosenthal, *Judaism and Islam*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Some Religious Aspects of Islam: A Collection of Articles* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), pp. 73-89.

342 Waardenburg, p. 5.

or psychological unmasking, as in S. 25: 43, 'what do you think of someone who has made of his desire or wish his god?'³⁴³

Initially, Muhammad tried his best to win the Quraysh to his side; they rejected him and his message. Only a few recognized him, believed in him and accepted his words. These few carried his message to all corners of the world after his death. With them, Muhammad fought the Quraysh and conquered Mecca in 630 C. E and from that time on, Islam took a strong hold and the people of Mecca gradually became Muslims.

The same arguments that were used in the *Qur'an* against the polytheists of Mecca were used against other groups of polytheists around the world. In the areas where Islam spread through Muslim traders, it did so peacefully and the indigenous traditions were able to influence the practice of Islam in those areas. Many of the local traditions crept into Islam and became part of the Muslim culture. Unfortunately, non-believers, people who are wrongly labeled "pagans, animists, and idolaters," become victims of world evangelic religions, which attempt to win converts from the adherents of these traditions. They perceive Africans and some Asians as having no genuine religion. Some Africans have begun to raise critical questions as to the difference between a belief in trinity and in many Gods. What makes Hinduism a world religion and but not African religions, despite the fact that both believe in numerous gods? What good moral values are taught by Islam and Christianity that African or Hindu religions do not teach? Ironically, each world religion claims to possess a monopoly on the truth. The African religions and Hinduism, which are inclusive and accommodative of other religions, have become victims because of their tolerance and openness to others. Christian and Muslim missionaries embark on intensive efforts to win all African peoples and Indians to Christianity by all means. As such, they accord no respect to local religions. The sacrifice of animals for death was considered an act of paganism, and respect for other religions other than Christianity and Islam was seen as a shift of loyalty and a sign of weakness of faith.

While some Muslims also aim at converting others to Islam, missionary work is not well organized or sponsored by Muslim

343 *Ibid.*

governments nowadays, except in a few Arab countries. Local and indigenous Muslims often carry out missionary work themselves. When missionaries come from the Arab world, they teach people about the *Qur'an*, Arabic and Islamic studies and leave them alone. There is no competition regarding leadership of the community, for the Africans themselves are in charge. And there are similarities between Islam and African traditions. Africans feel more at home with Islam than with Christianity, which occasionally alienates new converts from the family. Christians have been taught to look down upon their relatives who have not confessed Jesus as the Savior. After the Iraqi Gulf war of 1990-2, Saudi and the Arab Emirate's support for Islamic mission (*dawa*) dropped significantly and many Islamic programs were cancelled. Most of these programs were launched initially to promote certain ideologies in the Muslim world. After September 11th, Arab countries stopped giving money for the propagation of Islam so as not to be suspected of sponsoring terrorism.

Islam considers all polytheistic religions to be wrong because of their belief in many gods and goddesses. Polytheists usually believe in one supreme god but they also recognize many lesser gods, which function as assistants to the supreme god. These lesser gods deal with people on earth, while the supreme god supervises. And since Islam abhors making any association with God, polytheists are called "*mushrikum*," the associators. Polytheists do not believe in punishment in hell fire, and do not expect salvation after death. Human salvation, they believe, exists on earth. Hence, they are not worried about the next life the way Muslims and Christians worry about resurrection and final judgment.

Islam and Hinduism

Hinduism is defined as a diverse body of religious, philosophical, and cultural practices native to and predominant in India, characterized by a belief in reincarnation and a supreme being of many forms and natures. Hindus also see opposing theories as aspects of one eternal truth and desire liberation from earthly evils.³⁴⁴ Hinduism is also known as the dominant religion of India, which is characterized by a caste system and a belief in reincarnation. It is a complex system of beliefs,

344 *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language*, s. v. Hinduism, 4th ed., (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000).

values, and customs including the worship of many gods, especially the Trimurti, which is composed of Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva, the Destroyer. It views all forms and theories of being as aspects of one eternal truth. The practice of the way of works, of knowledge and of devotion is perceived as a means of getting release from the round of rebirth.³⁴⁵ Hinduism has many elaborate rituals and numerous sacred books from which believers draw their inspiration. It is one of the major religions of the world and claims the third largest number of adherents after Christianity and Islam. It is a rich religion with its own uniqueness and culture. Many scholars perceive Hinduism as an inclusive tradition, at least in theory. It posits one absolute reality from which all other things emerge. To Hindus, there is no need to unify gods because each god has its own function to perform in the daily lives of adherents.

Interaction of Islam with Hinduism

The first major interaction of Muslims with Hindus began in 712 C. E. when Muhammad bin Qasim, the son in law of the governor of Iraq, conquered Sind and declared it a Muslim state. It was from that time that the strife between Muslims and Hindus began. Being the conquerors, Muslims thought they were superior to Hindus and imposed a poll-tax (*jizyah*) on them. Hindus in return perceived Muslims as invaders and outcast people. Despite this, Muslim leaders ruled India for more than 1000 years; they did not impose Islam on them. There were interactions between both religions on official levels, but Indian citizens did not wholeheartedly welcome Muslims. Thus, both groups suspected one another. Meaningful and peaceful interaction was absent, as pointed out by the Quraysh.

They have lived with minimum contacts. There has been little inter-marriage, because Islam forbids it with the Hindus and the Hindus are bound by their rules of caste. Except in a small sector of the highly Westernized class, inter-dining has been unthinkable. The festivals provide no social occasion for coming together; instead they have often given a pretext for

rioting. The communities have remained different not only in religion but in everything, culture, outlook on life, dress, cookery, furniture and domestic utensils. There has been no sense of a common history. The heroes of the Muslim conquest and the rebels against Muslim domination inspire contradictory feeling among Muslims and Hindus.³⁴⁶

When the British conquered India in 1857, the Muslims were disposed of their authority while the Hindus, being the majority, were able to reassert themselves. By the time India won its independence, the tension between Muslims and Hindus had intensified and grown out of control. All efforts by Mahatma Gandhi to win the support of Muslims to be part of a united India failed, thus the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, where Muslims hoped they would be free to practice Islam and establish Islamic law. That hope is yet to be achieved.³⁴⁷ Pakistan is fraught with schism, corruption and domestic violence today.

Both Islam and Hinduism are world religions. They are rich in culture, yet each has its distinctive qualities. Nevertheless, there are some differences among them. Muslims believe in the unity of God while Hindus believe in several gods, goddesses and numerous lesser gods. Hindus sanctify the cow as the most sacred animal and mother goddess which should never be killed or harmed,³⁴⁸ whereas Muslims kill cows for food and for rituals, particularly during *Eid al-Adha*. Islam strongly condemns *Suti*, the voluntary suicide of a woman by throwing herself into fire as an expression of love for her deceased husband. It is said to be religiously encouraged in Hinduism. Also, the caste system has been one of the social structures of Hinduism for a very long time. The system of caste is held as a divine institution. However, Islam rejects it completely because it posits that all human beings are equal before God regardless of their birth, color or race. Islam prohibits

346 Rajmohan Gandhi, *Eight Lives: A Study of the Hindu-Muslim Encounter* (New York: State University of New York, 1986), p. 4, quoted by I. H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Mouton and Co., The Hague, 1962), p. 348.

347 Asghar Ali Engineer, "Muslim Views of Hindus," in *Muslim Perception of Other Religions*, ed., Waardenburg, p. 263.

348 The Hindus found cow to be extremely useful in their agrarian way of life and began to worship it as a manifestation of God.

345 www.worldnet.com accessed on June 25, 2001.

marriage with Hindus on the ground that they are polytheists and when intermarriage does occur, in deviance to religion, it occasionally leads to confrontation and tension among families. The root of these tensions stems from the sense of nationalism among Hindus and commitment to Islam among Muslims.

Unlike the previous invaders, the Muslims did not merge themselves with the Hindus and thus for the first time the population of India was divided into two separate units with marked distinctions. This was the historic beginning of the Hindu-Muslim problem that led after more than six hundred years to the creation of Pakistan.³⁴⁹

There is little hope that Muslims and Hindus will come together or have peaceful interactions on an equal level. The wound of the history Islam left in India has not been healed. Hindus think that they were invaded, persecuted, and maltreated by Muslims for hundreds of years. Nonetheless, both Islam and Hinduism have influenced one another in language, culture and in many other areas.

Culture also flowed the other way. Many Hindu men took to the Muslim *achkan* (long coat) and *pajama* (loose trousers) and Hindus of both sexes sought favours from the tombs of Muslim saints. It was common for the Muslim ruler to celebrate Holi, Rakhi, Dussehra and Diwali and to fete Hindus and Muslim together. But the most significant fusion was over language. The court, Hindu and Muslim subjects and Muslim and Hindu poets increasingly used a new language that was evolving, Urdu, which had strong Persian and Arabic flavors but was, in Hali's words, "based on Hindi."³⁵⁰

349 Rajmohan Gandhi, *Eight Lives: A Study of the Hindu-Muslim Encounter* (New York: State University of New York, 1986), p. 4, quoting R. C. Majumdar and others, *The Delhi Sultanate* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1960, quoted in Malik, *Moslem Nationalism*, p. 299.

350 Rajmohan Gandhi, *Eight Lives: A Study of the Hindu-Muslim Encounter* (New York: State University of New York, 1986), pp. 8-9.

Nowadays, there are more than 150 million Muslims in India and the number grows every year due to the increase in the Indian population. There exists no official debate or dialogue between the two due to the tension in Kashmir and the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. However, individual Muslims and Hindus do interact with one another. The 150 million minority Muslims in India consider themselves Indians in all sense and live together as neighbors to Hindus. The Indians who live in Pakistan do not want to be called Pakistanis and the Pakistanis who live in India do not wish to be called Indians due to tribal tensions and strife among them. Indian Muslims feel occasionally that they have been marginalized and threatened in India, a country that claims to be secular and democratic. Hindus insist that India is the largest Hindu state on earth.

It is unfortunate that, though the Indian state is secular, religion has come to acquire a primordial place in Indian politics. Nothing could have been great a disaster for this multi-religious and multi-ethnic society.³⁵¹

It should be pointed out, however, that Muslims and non-Muslim Indians often have good relationships abroad in places such as East Africa, Arabia, South Africa, Europe and North America.

Islam and Buddhism

Millions of Muslims have never seen Buddhists or heard of them, particularly Arab and African Muslims. Those few Muslims who have heard of them in the West have no knowledge about Buddhism. Therefore, Muslim perception of Buddhism is fraught with suspicion. Thomas Cleary has argued that, looking into Islam and Buddhism from a doctrinal point of view, it appears to be no similarity between the two because Islam radically represents monotheism, while Buddhism radically represents agnosticism. Yet, by looking deeply, there are some commonalities and similarities.³⁵² The word Buddhism is not seen in the Qur'an or in the Hadith, whereas, Zoroastrianism, which is known

351 Asghar Ali Engineer, "Muslim Views of Hindus," in *Muslim Perceptions*, ed., Waardenburg, p. 269.

352 Thomas Cleary, "Buddhism and Islam," in *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan*, vol. 27, 1982, pp. 31-38.

as *majus*, appears in the *Qur'an* 22:17. However, the encounter of Muslims with Buddhists dates back to as early as 751 C. E in Persia and Afghanistan when Muslim expansion reached neighboring countries.

Typical features of Buddhism are the realization of the Four Noble Truths as espoused by Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, the enlightened person. He is believed to be the founder of Buddhism in the 6th century B. C. The Four Noble Truths express the idea that suffering is inevitable in human life; that the cause of suffering is human desire to be this or that; and that cravings and desires can be eliminated. That is, suffering ceases when desire ceases. The means to eliminate suffering is to apply the Eight Fold-Path, which consists of: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right meditation or concentration, right mindfulness, right behavior, and right living. These descriptions are suggestions. Buddhists are at liberty to apply whatever they think will help them attain Nirvana, which is enlightenment – the release from desire, suffering and rebirth. The final goal in Buddhism is to stop the suffering which occurs when one attains Nirvana, enlightenment. At this stage one is not born again, hence he does not go through the suffering again.

Buddhists do not believe in a theistic God. The suffering that human beings experience is caused by human beings and thus needs human solution. God, if there is one, does not cause suffering and therefore should not be responsible for its cure. The key word to the understanding of Buddhism is **detachment** from all that is unreal. And since everything on earth has no permanent feature, it is unreal. There is nothing tangible that is worthy of human attachment, thus the concept of *Anatman* (no-soul). This awareness of the impermanence of everything is the fundamental truth in Buddhism. Members recognize this truth, know it, and understand it. Everything which has been created in Buddhist thought is impermanent, and whatever is impermanent is inherently ill. Hence there is no permanent happiness or bliss. Nothing is to be found in what is impermanent except pain and peril. This is Buddhism in nutshell, along with elaborate moral values and numerous techniques of meditation and discipline of the soul.

The concept of God was absent in the original teachings of Buddha. Some scholars think that Buddhism represents a philosophy of life and therefore is not a religion for lack of belief in any deity. But no one

has the right to define what a religion should be for everyone because there is no agreed upon criteria or definition of religion. The Buddha's religion was a simple teaching, which he likened to a raft leaving the shore of suffering and impermanence in order to get a person to another shore of bliss and safety, true permanent reality—Nirvana, a freedom from the suffering of re-incarnation and rebirth.

The Encounter Between Islam and Buddhism

As we've stated, Muhammad and his immediate companions had no acquaintance with Buddhists. They had no knowledge about them at all. Muslim's first encounter with Buddhism was in Persia during the Umayyad Empire. Muslims, in expanding their territories, met with Buddhists around 751 C. E. and conquered them. Eventually, they were driven away from Persia and Afghanistan. Those who remained within Muslim territories paid a tax-poll to Muslims for their protection. However, Muslims did not force their religion on them or persecute them, except on rare occasions. In general, though, Muslim perceptions of Buddhism are colored with the Muslim mind-set, which sees them as non-believers in any deity. As such, Muslims think that they should introduce Islam to them. We have no evidence that this succeeded. All that history records for us is that some Buddhists met Muslims in India and in China, and in few other places. Each group considers the other an enemy despite the fact that Buddhists are seen to be tolerant of other religious communities.

Conversely, the post-Mongol late 14th century Uighur *Insadi-Sutra* had Buddhist denunciation of Islam, Muhammad described as evil, and messianic hopes expressed that Maitreya, the future Buddha would soon return and even win over the kingdom of Baghdad (bagdat).³⁵³

On the other hand, Muslims describe Buddhism as:

... Islam saw Buddhism as suffering from the twin evils of idolatry, through its use of richly decorated visual

353 David Scott, "Buddhism and Islam: Past to Present Encounters and Interfaith Lessons," in *Numen*, vol. 42 (1995): 141-155.

statues and paintings; and of atheism, though not having a theistic God at the center of their religious system.³⁵⁴

Despite these major differences, there are some similarities. Both religions teach strong self-discipline and meditation, though the methods of discipline vary. There is great emphasis on moral values, recitation and devotion, which are perceived as the core of both traditions. It was reported that Muslim mystics (the *Sufis*) were greatly influenced by Buddhist monks, the *Bikkhus*. At present, Muslims and Buddhists live together in many countries, particularly in Thailand, Burma, Sri-Lanka, and Malaysia. Although there is little structured dialogue between the two, leaders in both groups do visit one another occasionally and participate in each other's religious celebrations.

Such implicit possibilities have been explicitly suggested more recently by Sophie Gilliat who has directly pinpointed social-ethical issues as a particularly appropriate bridge between Islam and Buddhism, termed by her as common "hidden doctrines" such as 'the desire to preserve life, welfare issues, and the struggle against human injustice.' The involvement of the London Buddhist Bihara in the 'Faith, Asylum, Refugees' campaign may be a sign of such co-operation over issues of common concern.³⁵⁵

The tension between them is less when compared to the tensions between Muslims and Christians in those countries. Recently, there was tension between Buddhists and Muslims in Thailand and Sri-Lanka. Muslims claim that they are being marginalized politically in those countries.

Islam and Baha'i Religion

The conflict between the Bahai religion and Islam has been great since the birth of the Babi movement and Bahai religion. Bahai is one of the newest religions in the world. No reference is made to the Bahai

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

religion in the statistics of religions of the world.³⁵⁶ Bahai developed from the Babi movement, which was introduced in Shiraz, Iran in 1844 by Sayid Ali Muhammad, the Bab. He was born in Shiraz on October 20, 1819 to a family of merchants. He attended school until the age of thirteen after which he joined his uncle in the family business in Shiraz. He was known to have devoted most of his youth to meditation and frequented the holy Muslim shrines of the martyred Imams. He married Khadijah in Iran and settled down there. He declared himself to be the awaited Messiah (the Hidden Imam or Qaim) as predicted in Shi'ite Islam. It was said that his declaration took place at *Ka'aba* in Mecca on October 20, 1844. When he claimed to be *messiah*, no attention was given to his declaration; he was ignored.³⁵⁷ But when his disciples grew in number, he was denounced by the Muslims of Iran on the ground that he was a heretic for proclaiming prophethood. In Islam, Muhammad is believed to be the *Seal of the Prophets*, that is, no prophet will come after him. He is believed to have delivered all that is expected to be known about God until the Day of Judgment. Eventually, the Bab and his followers were persecuted and he was executed publicly in 1850 by the Iranian government. After his death, his disciples were tortured by the Shi'ite leadership. The government perceived the Babi group to be heretic and was alarmed by the great number of people joining the movement.

However, before his brutal death, the Bab prophesized that a messenger would come after him who would fulfill his message. That messenger came in the person of Mirza Hussain Ali, later known as Bahaullah - the Glory of God. Hussain Ali joined the Babi movement in 1844 and became one of its ardent followers and leaders, and suffered tremendously at the hands of the Iranian government. Ironically, Bahaullah was older than the Bab himself. Sayyid Ali Muhammad, the Bab, was born in 1819 while Hussain Ali, Bahaullah, was born in 1817. The Bahais pay little attention to this absurdity which can be likened to Jesus declaring that a messenger would come after him. And then after his death, John the Baptist appeared and claimed that he was the one that Jesus spoke about. To the Bahais, this is the truth

³⁵⁶ David Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission," in *International Bulletin*, vol. 21, no. 1 (January 1997): 24-25.

³⁵⁷ William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion* (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1998), pp. 8-9.

which must be believed because God can send anyone He wants to be a messenger. Muslims wonder why Bahaullah did not know that he was the awaited prophet before the death of the Bab, and why Bab himself did not recognize that one of his followers was the awaited messiah. Nonetheless, Bahais believe very strongly that Bahaullah was the prophet of the modern age and that he came to revive all previous religions.

Bahaullah declared himself the promised Prophet on April 22, 1863 at Ridvan garden in Baghdad before his exile to Turkey in May 1863. In Turkey, he was imprisoned and remained there until his death in Bahji near Acre on May 29, 1892. It was in prison that he claimed to have received all his revelations from God and wrote them down himself. It was said that Bahaullah wrote more than one hundred books from the revelation he received. He appointed his son Abdul Baha, Abbas, to be his successor. Abbas in turn appointed his son Shogi Effendi as the leader after him and interpreter of the faith. Both Abbas and Shogi traveled extensively in Europe and America to spread the new religion. When Shogi Effendi died in 1957 with no son to inherit or succeed him, leadership of the Bahai religion became elective after a hiatus of several years. In 1963, nine male members were elected to the Universal House of Justice, the highest administrative sector of the Bahais. This is the supreme council and the highest authority in Bahai tradition. Despite the fact that the Bahais emphatically teach the equality of men and women in everything, no woman has ever been elected or appointed to the Universal House of Justice since its establishment. Any attempt to raise such critical questions about gender discrimination and inequality in the distribution of leadership position is met with anger and suppression by the leaders of the Bahais, who label such critics as covenant-breakers, as pointed out by Juan Cole in his article.³⁵⁸

Basic Teachings of Bahai Religion

The basic teachings of the Bahai faith can be summarized as:

- 1) The belief in the oneness of God, who is the Creator of everything;

³⁵⁸ Juan Cole, "The Bahai Faith in America as Panopticon 1963-1997" in *Journal For the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 2 (June 1998): 234-248.

- 2) Belief in oneness of humanity. Human beings are one nation regardless of their color, race, and nationality;
- 3) That the foundation of all religions is one. Thus the motto: One God, one nation, and one religion. To the Bahais, all religions stem from the same source, but a newer religion abrogates the old ones. And since Bahaullah is the new Prophet of the modern age, his message is the newer one. It modifies all the previous messages. By implication, he must be followed. Religion is a progressive phenomenon, thus the emergence of idea of progressive revelation which means that God sends messengers as needed;
- 4) The belief that religion must be the cause of unity and harmony; it should not be the cause of enmity and friction or war;
- 5) The belief that religion must be in accord with science and reason, even though they strongly believe that 750 bullets were shot against the Bab, yet he did not die on that day but found in his home alive;
- 6) There must be equality between men and women; and
- 7) The need for the establishment of universal peace, universal education, and universal auxiliary language, and finding a spiritual solution to economic problems faced by human beings.

In addition to the above, the Bahais also believe that human beings are created as noble and spiritual beings. They do not believe in a physical resurrection of the body after death. There is no physical hell or heaven. To the Bahais, heaven is a state of nearness to God and hell is a state of remoteness from God. They believe that heaven and hell are symbolic and not places of enjoyment or punishment, as painted by Islam, for instance. About what exactly will happen to the soul after death, the Bahais give no specific answer.

When it comes to worship, there is no specific or mandatory formal prayer. Members are free to pray in whatever way they prefer, but they must pray so as to be close to God. Prayer is a form of communication with God. There is no mandatory congregational daily or weekly prayer. Members meet once in nineteen days at the fireside for prayer

and social activities. The Bahai have three administrative sectors: Local Spiritual Assembly, National Spiritual Assembly, and Universal House of Justice. Each sector has nine elective members who run the affairs of the Bahai community, locally and nationally. They oversee the daily administration of the group and render various services to all members. There are nineteen months in the Bahai calendar; each month consists of nineteen days. They also observe fasting from March 2-20 every year. They have their own festivals and social activities, which mostly mark historical events that happened during the lifetime of Bab and Bahaullah. The Bahais have no clergymen. Members appoint or select whomever they want to lead them in their religious and social activities. They also discourage engagement in politics, which they consider to be foul play. However, members are free to vote for any candidate or any political party if they so choose. They are instructed to obey and respect the government that is in place.

Relationship Between the Muslims and the Bahais

Shi'ite Muslims consider the Bahai religion as a heretic sect that branched out from the Shi'ite Islam. Originally, both Ali Muhammad and Bahaullah, Hussain Ali, were Shi'ite Muslims before they declared themselves the awaited prophets. The Iranians thought they were illegitimate prophets and considered them apostates. Hence they were persecuted. Many orthodox Muslims believe that the basic beliefs of Bahai, especially the concept of the oneness of all religions, are erroneous. They question how monotheistic religions like Islam and Judaism can be on equal level with polytheistic traditions like Hinduism or African traditions. They ask why those who believe in God are equated with those who do not believe in any deity, like Buddhists. Muslims are of the opinion that the Bahais are not realistic in their advocacy for the unity of all religions. But the Bahais think that since God created human beings differently, no one religion will satisfy the spiritual needs of all people. Therefore, there is a need for new religions and renewal of old traditions by new prophets, among which Bahaullah is one of them. The Bahais believe that there will be more prophets in the future. To them, God is so merciful and loving that He will continue to send prophets to human beings whenever

there is a need for it. This concept is labeled "**Progressive Revelation**" among the Bahais.

On the other hand, Islam strongly believes in life after death, whereby believers are rewarded for good deeds and punished for bad deeds. The Bahais do not believe in a physical life after death or in reward and punishment. In politics, Islam has no separation between religious and political life. Whereas, the Bahai, while not condemning politics totally, discourages its members from full involvement in politics, locally and internationally. The Bahais prefer a secular to non-secular state. Thus, until recently, Bahais have kept silent about the events in Israel and Palestine. Iranian leaders and scholars perceive the Bahai faith as a deviance from true Islam. Shi'ites expect the Mahdi will follow Islam and establish justice when he comes; he will not deviate from the basic principles of Islam. Bahaullah claims that his new message overrides the previous messages of Islam and thus he denies life after death and the day of resurrection, as well as eternal life for the righteous or eternal hell for unbelievers.³⁵⁹ He rejects Islamic laws of inheritance and designed his own inheritance rules.³⁶⁰ Finally, Muslim scholars who study the Bahai religion suspect the Bahais of having no solid religious background, for the Bahais are free to worship in whatever ways they want and read from any other religious scriptures.³⁶¹ Of course, the writings of the Bab and Bahaullah are preferred to other scripture even though these writings are laced with many ideas from other scriptures and interpretations of Bahai leaders after Bahaullah.³⁶²

359 The day of resurrection in Bahai religion is the day when Bahaullah appeared to be the prophet of God. "The day of the rise of God Himself through His all-embracing Revelation." (p.143) "When the Q'aim riseth, that day is the Day of Resurrection?" (p. 144) "This is the meaning of the "Day of Resurrection," spoken of in all the scriptures, and announced unto all people. Bahaullah, *The Kitab - I-Iqan: The Book of Certitude* (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'I Publishing Trust, 1983 [pocket-size edition], pp 143-144.

360 Bahaullah, *The Kitab - I-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahai's Publishing Trust, 1993), pp. 28-30.

361 Bahaullah, *The Kitab -I - Aqdas*, pp168-176, notes # 4-23. In these pages, Bahaullah spells out how a Bahai should pray and why. His instructions on prayers are ignored by the Bahais.

362 For critical evaluation of the Bahai traditions, see Juan Cole's article as mentioned above. He argues that the Bahai leadership exercises so much control methods to silence the critics and the opponents of Bahai religion, particularly

There is hardly any formal dialogue between Bahais and Muslims. Occasionally, Muslims and Bahais outside the Middle East meet at interfaith dialogue gatherings and share their concerns. The Bahais perceive Muslims as intolerant people and persecutors; they often refer to the situations in Iran. Muslims consider the Bahais a heretical sect, which deliberately deviates from true Islamic teachings for political purposes. Since they are victims of politic revolution in Iran, they abhor participation in politics as they were instructed by Shogi Effendi in 1930s. One wonders how the Bahais can lead the world if they have no political government to support them? Ironically, too, the population of the Bahai all over the world is less than seven million at most, even though they claim to be the second fastest growing religion in the world.³⁶³

Many Muslims, except those who come from Iran, have never heard about the Bahai religion or about Bahaullah. Yet, the Bahais have built some great social and religious centers around the world. Only a few people actually have knowledge about them and what they stand for. Even in North America, the Bahai religion is unknown and unheard of by millions of people despite the fact that it was introduced in America before 1912, and Abbas, Abdul Bahai, visited the U.S. in 1912 to launch the movement. Muslims do not recognize Bahai as a religion because of Bahaullah's denial of the Prophet Muhammad as the last messenger of God. To Muslims, the belief in the oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad is the first pillar of Islam.³⁶⁴

Summary

Islam, being a religion of submission to God, has not come to people who have no concept of God. From its inception, Muslims

if the critic is a member of Bahai religion. See also in Arabic language, Muhsin Abdul Hameed, *Haqiqat al-Babiyyah wal Baha'iyyah* [The True Nature of Babism and Bahai Religion] (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1985), pp. 126-131.

363 Bahai Booklet, *The Bahais: A Profile of the Bahai Faith and Its World Wide Community* (Leicestershire, UK: Bahai Publishing Trust of the United Kingdom, 1994), p. 14.

364 For more information about the Bahai religion, see William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*. Wilmette, Illinois: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1998.

have had contact with People of the Book: the Christians and the Jews. The relationship between Muslims and Christians is based on mutual respect as well as on social and spiritual support. Thus, when the Quraysh, Muhammad's tribe, began its persecution against the Muslims, the Abyssinian Christian King Negus (*al-Najashi*), rendered support to Muslims. They immigrated to Abyssinia; they were well-received, accommodated and protected. They lived there as long as they wanted before many of them returned to Medina. Others lived permanently there. Muhammad kept a good relationship with the Christians in Medina but his immediate successors did not do the same. Islam was expanded to Christian territories in Najran and to the Byzantine Empire. After many long and numerous battles, Muslims were victorious. Yet, they respected Christian converts and allowed those who did not convert to practice their religion.

After the death of Muhammad, Jerusalem fell under Islamic rule during the reign of the second Caliph, Umar bin Al-Khattab in 638 C. E. Sophronius, Jerusalem's ruling patriarch, offered the keys of the city of Jerusalem to Umar. Upon entering the blessed city of Jerusalem, Umar inquired about David's Temple (*masjid al-Aqsa*) and the blessed Rock from where the Prophet Muhammad was said to have ascended to heaven. According to historians, David's temple was a garbage dump for Jerusalem's people. Umar cleaned it with his own hands and prayed there. The sacred mosque (*masjid al-Aqsa*) was built in that area. Later, the Dome of the Rock, a more elaborate mosque, was built in 691 C. E.

Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together peacefully in Jerusalem until tension grew among them. Christians perceived Muslims as invaders and thus mobilized their followers to launch holy wars against them. Hence, in 1099 C. E., Christian crusaders entered Jerusalem and brutally killed Muslims, who were considered infidels. No Muslim life was spared. No Muslims or Jews could live in Jerusalem under Crusade rule for 88 years (1099-1187). Christian leaders rejoiced in their victory and felt proud of rescuing Jerusalem from the authority of Muslims. However, a century later, a Muslim leader, *Salahudeen* (Saladin) sacked Jerusalem and won it back to Muslim rule without bloodshed. He allowed those Christians who wanted to stay to remain in Jerusalem and their churches were not destroyed. The Jews were also allowed to

stay and practice their religion. The good news of his accommodation of both Christians and Jews was welcomed and appreciated in Europe at that time.

Muslims also encounter Christians in Turkey, Spain and Africa. At times, they treat one another as friends, and at times, are antagonistic. The causes of their strife can be related to the *Qur'an*, which specifically denounces the lordship of Jesus as God or the son of God. It also rejects Christian's idea of crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus. The *Qur'an* accuses Christians of tampering with their scripture. Thus many Muslims believe that the Bible has been changed or subjected to various modifications and unwarranted interpretations by diverse religious sects and leaders to suit their ideological interpretations. However, Muslims and Christians have begun dialogue; this has yielded fruitful results, among which is the opportunity to learn more about one another and have a better understanding of both Islam and Christianity. Both are aware that they worship the same God in different ways. Of course, many orthodox Muslims and Christians disagree; some believe they are not worshipping the same God.

Both Islam and Christianity are mission oriented religions; they often compete to win new members through various missionary activities. This occasionally leads to confrontation and misgiving. Muslim existence and their often aggressive evangelization in America and Europe anger many Christian missionaries. But, on the other hand, Christianity has won many converts in the Muslim world. The Christian Copts have been in Egypt before the birth of Islam and are still there today. The fact is that Muslims and Christians are neighbors and should learn to tolerate one another.

Muslim and Christian men and women have lived together in the Middle East for the most part as good neighbors. Given the mosaic character of Middle Eastern societies throughout their long history, Muslims, Christians and Jews lived with a good measure of concord and harmony. This was due, at least in part, to social courtesy which is a common characteristic of Eastern peoples, regardless of their religious affiliations. There were, of course, outbreaks of conflict, but often these were incited either by a

particular group of people for particular political ends, or by outside influences. Within the framework of this common courtesy, dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East has not been a dialogue about religious beliefs and theological doctrines. It is rather a neighborly relationship of sharing, sharing in each other's festivals and other joyous celebrations, and in sad occasions of death and calamity. In short, they shared a daily life as one community of different, but mutually respected faiths.³⁶⁵

Muhammad did not have an immediate relationship with the Jews in Mecca, even though he received many stories about them in the Meccan chapters of the *Qur'an*. It was in Medina that he had initial contact with them. Initially, he respected Judaism and felt proud that Islam was an extension and a completion of the message brought by Jewish prophets like Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, etc. He concluded a peace-treaty with them to protect the city of Medina against the Quraysh. He faced Jerusalem in his prayer with the hope that the Jews would recognize him and follow his religion. He was disappointed. The Jews, according to Muslim biographers, breached the pact on three occasions and collaborated with Meccan troops to fight Muhammad. Eventually, Muhammad conquered the Quraysh. He considered Jewish breaching of the treaty a betrayal and thus expelled them from Medina. Since then, the relationship between Muslims and Jews has not been cordial.

Islam's attitude toward Jews and Judaism in the religious-theological realm is herewith sufficiently defined. Jews, like Christians, had been recognized as a community, possessing a revealed document and been called 'People of the Book.' They were asked to live by the Torah. As such, they had religious and cultural autonomy. Yet, the *Qur'an* continued to invite them to Islam and also to recognize Jesus as a Prophet since they possessed only 'a portion of the Book,' i.e., of divine

365 Mahmoud Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity Between Tolerance and Acceptance," in *I.C.M.R.*, vol. 2, # 2 (December 1991): 171-181.

guidance. Thus, at the religious level, the relationship is somewhat ambiguous, although there is no doubt that Jewish religious and cultural autonomy was respected. When we come to the political side of the picture, it is a sad story. The relations of Jews with Muhammad were not happy even while he was in Mecca, because there is evidence that Jews of Medina had collaborated with Meccan pagans against the Prophet in supplying the latter with a questionnaire on religious issues to be put to Muhammad.³⁶⁶

However, when Muslims conquered both Roman and Persian empires, many Jews worked for Muslims. The Jews have never enjoyed peaceful coexistence under any government or religion more than they enjoyed under Muslim rule in Baghdad, Spain and Turkey.

... for approximately thirteen-and-a-half centuries of the post-Prophetic Islamic history, the relationship between Muslims and Jews has been not only peaceful but, indeed, fruitfully cooperative. ... Muslims displayed an international, interracial and interfaith openness and a humanism that is unprecedented. Not that there was no discrimination against Jews and Christians, but there was no large-scale oppression and, positively, there was an active willingness to give and take at the cultural level. Indeed, the weft and warp of Islamic civilization was made up of diverse cultural elements and in its variety and richness has no match in history.³⁶⁷

In Jerusalem in the seventh century, Christians did not allow Jews to worship at the Wailing Wall. When the Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab conquered it in 638 C. E., he permitted Jews to worship, practice their religion and apply their laws. And after the Crusade, when Saladin re-captured it in 1187 C. E. and defeated the Crusaders, he allowed the Jews to stay; they were accorded great respect as the People of the

366 Fazlu Rahman, "Islam's Attitude toward Judaism," in *The Muslim World*, vol. 72, no. 1 (January 1982): 1-13.

367 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Book. Also in 1492, when the Christians massacred both Muslims and Jews in Spain, Muslim authority welcomed the Jews in Turkey and gave them protection under the Ottoman Empire.

On a religious level, the portrayal of the Jews in the *Qur'an* is negative. They were suspected of killing their prophets, of disobeying God, of breaching their covenants with God, and of altering the message sent to them. This portrayal allows some Muslims to belittle the Jews and undermine their scriptures.³⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Muslim and Jews have lived peacefully together in the past. They borrowed from one another despite the claim of some modern Jewish scholars that anything good in Islam is borrowed from Judaism without recognizing that without the protection and patronage afforded the Jews by Muslim leaders in Islamic empires, the Jews would not have survived. Acculturation always occurs from both sides.

At present, the relationship between Islam and Judaism or between Muslims and Jews is at stake due to the Arab-Israel war. When the State of Israel was planted and declared a sovereign state on May 14, 1948, many Palestinians were displaced. A majority of them ended up in refugee camps and some are still there. After three major wars between Arabs and Israel, the relationship between them strained and continues to deteriorate. Durkee points out that:

Muslims find it difficult to understand why, when the ultimate safe haven from the depredations of the Christian Europeans, be they Orthodox, Roman or Protestant, was always the Muslim world, Jews in the present time seem to have forgotten that this has been the historical reality over the centuries.³⁶⁹

However, there is interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Jews in the West, particularly in America. Unfortunately, this dialogue has yet to yield any tangible fruit because of the tension between them due to the support of the U.S government to Israel despite its atrocities against the Palestinians and its defiance to nearly all the U. N's resolutions. However, one should never lose hope that one day both parties will

368 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

369 Abdullah Noorudeen Durkee, "Thoughts on Some Possibilities for Muslim-Jewish Dialogue," in *Dialogue and Alliance*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2000): 5-18.

stop warring and allow peace to prevail so that they can live together harmoniously without fear of persecution. It would be wise for everyone to remember the inscription on the ring of King Solomon: "*This too shall pass.*" Surely in the 5760 plus years of the recorded history of the children of Israel, the cyclical process whereby the oppressed becomes the oppressor and the oppressor is in turn oppressed is evident despite the cry "never again."³⁷⁰

With regard to polytheistic religions, Islam frowns upon them. Muslims waged wars against them from the beginning of Islam. The first encounter of Muslims with polytheism was at Mecca, with the Quraysh, Muhammad's tribe. Many people in Mecca rejected completely the message of Muhammad and refused to succumb to his authority and appeals. They fought one another until Muhammad finally conquered them in 630 C. E. at Mecca. The *Qur'an* contains many stories of bitter encounters and mistrust between Muslims and polytheists. And from the time of Muhammad until today, Muslims give no regard to polytheism merely because they have no revealed scripture, except for the followers of Hinduism. In Arabia and in all parts of the world, the relationship between Muslims and the followers of indigenous religions has not been positive. Muslims perceive them as potential subjects of conversion. Whenever they resist Muslim's aggressive mission works, they are persecuted and fought. They are bombarded with an assumed superior culture, the Islamic civilization, which in reality the indigenous perceive as foreign and corrupt. Oftentimes, when the indigenous religions are conquered, their practitioners syncretize the new religion by interlacing their old religious beliefs with the new concepts. Eventually, the outcome is not purely Islam but African Islam, or Indian Islam, or Indonesian Islam, which is a mixture of indigenous beliefs and Islamic practices. Putting a demarcation line between what is Islamic and what is indigenous is always hard whenever Islam interacts with African religions.

While Christianity, Judaism, Paganism, and Zoroastrianism are discussed in the *Qur'an*, there exists no reference to Hinduism and Buddhism. Islam considers both unacceptable religions because Hinduism recognizes many gods and goddesses while Buddhism has nothing to do with God(s). Muslims have long interacted with

Buddhists and Hindus. The Muslim army conquered India and ruled it for nearly 1000 years. During that period, Muslims distanced themselves from Hindus, who labeled Muslims as outcast people. However, there was a relatively good relationship during the reign of Emperor Akbar between 1560-1605 C. E. He fostered Hindu-Muslim cooperation. Later, both Muslims and Hindus were at each other's throats. When the British came, it dismantled the Muslim empire and put India under occupation for several decades before India finally won its independence from Britain in 1947.

After independence, there was mistrust between Muslims, the minority, and Hindus, the majority. Eventually, Muslims opted for a separate sovereign state and hence the Islamic State of Pakistan came into existence in 1947 with the hope that Muslim Pakistanis would be able to practice Islam unhindered by the Hindus. There continues to be strife between India and Pakistan, particularly on the issue of Kashmir, the Muslim territory, which the Indian government annexed and put under its military occupation. This has led to many confrontations and competition in military struggle and armament. Both India and Pakistan have developed destructive nuclear weapons and threaten each other. While many outsiders perceive the struggle in India and Pakistan as political, many insiders are convinced that it is a religious conflict. Yet, both are unready to discuss or dialogue on religious background because each group claims that its religion is supreme and there is no compromise for the fear of reaction from the fundamentalists from each group.

On the other hand, there is little tension between Muslims and Buddhists nowadays. Muslims in Buddhist countries like Sri-Lanka and Thailand are accommodated and tolerated by their Buddhist neighbors in most cases. Likewise, Buddhists in Muslim countries like in Malaysia are also accommodated. Occasionally, of course, there is tension, but it is insignificant.

Finally, the relationship between Islam and Bahai adherents is not cordial. Many Muslims know little about the Bahai religion. The Bahais are indoctrinated against Muslims by pointing out how the Iranian government persecutes and tortures Bahais who are living in Iran. It is the hope of the author that both groups work toward a good relationship and begin dialogue to better understand one another in

370 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

order to live peacefully with one another. Human beings are notoriously religious creatures. And since we have different spiritual yearnings, no one religion will satisfy the needs of all human beings. Therefore, there will always be numerous religious beliefs and our duty as rational beings lies in accepting the reality of pluralism by recognizing the existence of different religious traditions. Each group should have the right to exist and practice whatever its members want and respect each other. If God wants, He would have made humans one nation, but He made them different nations, different tribes, and groups to understand and know one another. The best among human beings, says the *Qur'an*, are the ones who are conscious of God. The essential duty of all religious and non-religious groups, therefore, is to create a just community in which all members of society, even the weak and the vulnerable are treated with absolute respect and justice regardless of their beliefs. Each person deserves this respect because he is a human being. No group should force its beliefs on others. "No compulsion in religion," thus says the *Qur'an* 2: 256.

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Chapter XII

Islam in America

Introduction

Although Islam has been spreading rapidly in the United States, it still has minority status and is often misunderstood in spite of the public relation efforts of various organizations both of a formal and an informal nature. It is also the victim of religious prejudice because of these misunderstandings, for, as sociologists point out, the latter led to the former.³⁷¹

The Arrival of Islam to America

It is no wonder that Islam first spread within the U.S. among the African Americans as it was first spread among the Black people when Muslims migrated to Abyssinia in 615 C. E., five years after Muhammad became the Prophet. Africans by their nature are very religious. The idea of believing and submitting to one Supreme God is central to their daily and social lives. However, the slaveholders believed that Africans who were brought to America had no concept of God and that American Christians were the first people to introduce

371 Emily Kalled Lovell, "Islam in the United States: Past and Present," in *The Muslim Community in North America*, ed., Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu Laban, and Regula B. Qurashi (Alberta: The University of Alberta Press, 1983), pp. 93-110.

them to Christianity. This claim is wrong and lacks empirical evidence. Technically, Islam was brought to America with the importing of slaves from West Africa. Many of these slaves were practicing Muslims in their countries before their enslavement and exploitation by Europeans and Americans. Islam had been an integral part of their daily lives in West Africa for several centuries before the arrival of the Europeans. Certainly, the Muslims who were brought to America had knowledge of Islam and of Christianity; they learned it from their sacred book, the *Qur'an*.

On the other hand, even before the advent of the slave trade, modern scholarship proved that Muslims were in America before the arrival of Columbus. Among Columbus's crew there were Muslims too.³⁷² Islam is not new in America, as many historians and some Christian evangelists would have us believe. Nonetheless, during the years of slave trade, Africans were allegedly assumed to have no religion at all. Hence, they were not allowed to practice anything. Historical records have shown, despite the tendency of slaveholders not to permit worship, that some Muslim slaves did practice their religion of Islam to the extent that they could. They prayed on the farms and rejected eating pork and drinking wine. They tried their best to uphold their beliefs.

They [Muslim slaves] did not succumb to acculturation imposed on them by their masters and by the society

they found themselves, but strove hard to maintain their traditions, social values, customs and particular identity.³⁷³

African American Muslims are proud of their Islamic heritage and of their African ancestors who were Muslims.

For many African American Muslims today, the presence of these Muslims in early American history, and their achievements, both before being taken into slavery and while in bondage, have added a great deal to the sense of pride in being Muslims and of sharing in the long struggle for freedom that has characterized the Black experience in America from its earliest days.³⁷⁴

Muslim Slaves and their Holders in the New World

Many Muslim slaves were severely punished for practicing Islam. Yet, some upheld their faith anyway, which enabled them to better cope with the tragedies of their daily lives. Slave-holders deliberately kept their slaves ignorant, never educating them or even teaching them Christianity for more than two hundred years. Slaves were not baptized into Christianity for the fear they would become equal to their holders. To keep them ignorant, the slaveholders adopted the policy of separating slaves that spoke the same language. Slave children were taken from their parents and sold far away. Thus they were unable to pass their Islamic heritage and culture to the next generations. Eventually, Islam weakened and many slaves began practicing the religion of their holders when they were allowed to do so. Islam, as a practical religion of the daily life of the slave, disappeared gradually when the early slaves began to die because they were not able to establish a community to perpetuate their religion.

Of course, there were a few Muslim slaves who despite all odds maintained their faith in Islam and documented what they went through in America in the Arabic language. Among these pioneer Muslim slaves

372 For more information about Islam in America before Columbus see: Abdullah Hakim Quick, *Deeper Roots: Muslims in the Americas and the Caribbean from Before Columbus to the Present*. London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 1998. See also Amir Rashid Ali Muhammad, *Muslims in America: Seven Centuries of History 1312-2000*. Beltsville, MD.: Amana Publications, 2001. Dr. Sulayman Nyang sheds light on the debate on the existence of Muslims in America before Columbus. He argues that even though there is no concrete evidence, yet, that Muslims were in America before Columbus, the discoveries of modern historians and the suggestions that there were Muslims in America at that time should be taken seriously. He suggests that more attention should be devoted to further research in the area. See Sulayman Nyang, *Islam in the United States of America* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1999), pp. 12-13. Jane Smith also argues that evidence regarding the existence of Muslims in the U.S. before Christopher Columbus is vague and thus more research needs to be conducted in such area. Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 50.

373 Sylviane C. Diof, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: N. Y. University Press, 1998), p. 3.

374 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 77.

were Ayoub bin Solomon (Job ben Solomon 1701-1773), Umar bin Sa'id (1770-1864), and Abdu Rahman Timbuktu (1761-1829). The stories of these brave slaves are now available in the works of American historians like Allen Austin, Sylviane Diof, Sulayman Nyang and Richard B. Turner.

Toward the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century a few African Americans started searching for their roots. After the abolition of slavery, free slaves found themselves with no identity, no culture of their own and no heritage to fall back upon. They were tired of being abused or neglected and ignored. Other groups and races that came to America retained their culture and were allowed to keep their genealogies, but the Africans had no record except for a few remnants in which literate Muslims wrote about their lives and captivity in America.³⁷⁵ Their search for identity led them to recognize that their ancestors were Muslims from Africa. They yearned to go back to their homeland, for there is no place like home. Hence, they formed many Islamic movements, which we will discuss in this chapter.

The Arrival of Arab Muslims to America

Toward 1870, a few Arabs had come to America in search of better lives. They scattered all around the country but were reluctant to profess Islam publicly, either because of lack of proper education about Islam or for fear of losing their jobs. Nonetheless, these Arab Muslims had no discernable effect upon society for a long time. The American social and religious environments seriously influenced them to the extent that some converted to Christianity and became totally assimilated to the secularized American culture. Those who did not convert to Christianity were unable to pass Islam to their children because they themselves had not adhered to Islamic ways of life or Islamic values; they largely occupied themselves with the search for

375 For the discussion of the lives of Muslim slaves before the 20th century, see Allan Austin, *African Muslims in the Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1995). Austin argues that at least 10% of the slaves brought from Africa to the U.S. were Muslims. Some of them were scholars. They documented the history of their enslavement. See also Sylviane Diof, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

wealth and paid no attention to religion. All their concerns revolved around the accumulation of wealth. Of course, some earned it but lost their faith and culture.

The Beginning of A New Era of Islam in America

The first regrouping of African Muslims under the banner of Islam occurred after the abolition of slavery. Many slaves migrated from the South to the urban North in search of jobs and new identities, but many employers were reluctant to hire them. In that terrible situation, Noble Drew Ali (1886-1929) from North Carolina launched his movement *the Moorish Science Temple of America* to give African Americans the opportunity to discover their origin. He wanted to unite his people, who had been oppressed by the Whites. Ali claimed that Africans were descendants of Asiatic origin. He taught them the importance of knowing their origins and showed them why they should celebrate their roots. He believed that Africans should be proud of their ancestor's contributions to civilization.

Undoubtedly, he would have felt sympathy for the statement made some years later by Malcolm X (who many in fact said to have obtained his inspiration from Noble Drew Ali) that 'just as a tree without roots is dead, a people without history or cultural roots becomes a dead people.'³⁷⁶

Nevertheless, in contrast to some African American leaders who preached that African slaves should migrate back to Africa, Ali insisted that America should be the new home for Africans. He never advocated a return to Africa. As such, he did not use the label "African Americans"; rather, he called his people "*Americans of African descent*." He advocated that these Americans of African descent respect the American flag, vote, and work hard to better their lot in America. Ali was the first Black Muslim leader to request his followers pay due respect to the American flag and register to vote.

376 Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, *Mission to America: Five Islamic Sektarian Communities in North America* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1993), pp. 79-80, quoting Archie Epps, ed., *The Speeches of Malcolm X at Harvard*, p. 81.

Timothy (Noble) Drew Ali was born in Sampson, North Carolina on January 8, 1886. As a young person, he worked as a railway expressman in New Jersey. He traveled to many Middle Eastern countries: Palestine, Egypt, Hijaz (later known as Saudi Arabia), and some other parts of the world like Morocco and India. There, he was exposed to Eastern cultures and Islam. We are not sure whether he converted to Islam when he was in Arabia or when he came back to America, or if he was a Muslim before he started his travels. However, upon his return to America, he launched the *Moorish Science Temple of America* in 1913. He emphasized that in order for any people to have a sense of self-worth, they must first have an identity: a name and a space of land.³⁷⁷

After launching his movement, many Americans of African descent joined him. The movement grew rapidly. New branches were opened in various parts of the U.S.A. Ali wrote instructional pamphlets for his followers and authored his own book of guidance entitled "*the Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America*." It contains forty-eight chapters of sixty-four pages.³⁷⁸ It was published in 1927 and was considered a constitution for his members. He did not claim that his book replaced the Arabic *Qur'an* received by Prophet Muhammad; however, he did claim that he himself was a reformer sent by God to liberate Black people from the oppression of White people. He strongly believed that God sends messengers to people whenever there is a need.³⁷⁹ Hence, each nation has its own prophet and he, Ali, was the prophet to the Americans of African descent. He elaborated his goals of unifying Americans of African descent as follows:

To dispense charity and provide for the mutual assistance of its members in times of distress; aid in the improvement of health and encourage the ownership of better homes; find employment for its members;

teach those fundamental principles which were desired for their civilization, such as obedience to law, loyalty to government, tolerance and unity.³⁸⁰

Ali put all his effort into promoting his movement and building an economic structure for his followers. As Smith points out, his members were encouraged to open businesses in order to achieve economic independence. He set up grocery stores, restaurants, perfume stores and a host of other small businesses. He was reported to have said: "*A beggar people cannot develop the highest in them, nor can they attain to a genuine enjoyment of the spiritualities of life.*"³⁸¹ He himself was relatively successful; he had had little confrontation with the American government because he did not publicly preach a separatist ideology. Rather, he encouraged his members to love and live peacefully with others. Yet, he created in them a sense of pride and worthiness. The opening page of his Koran reads: "*Know yourself and your father, God-Allah, that you may learn to love instead of hate.*" He was an ambassador of peace. The Moorish Temple devoted great attention to educating their children, who were seen as the leaders of tomorrow and the agents of continuity. Children must be properly educated, Ali confirmed.

A field of grass will grow on its own, but a garden of flowers requires cultivation. And if our children are to bloom and grow, deliberate educational stimulation must be introduced early into each child's home.³⁸²

Despite his positive approach and non-violent attitude, Ali's movement was perceived by orthodox Muslim as non-Islamic. They charged him of claiming prophethood and writing his own Koran, which was full of quotations from the Bible. He was accused of not paying enough attention to the practice of Islam as laid out in the *Qur'an*. Some of his members may have had copies of the Arabic *Qur'an*, but they were not reading or studying it. Many claimed Ali's teachings were

377 Adib Rashad, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery: A Detailed History* (Beltsville, Maryland: Writers Inc., 1995), p. 167.

378 Haddad and Smith, *Mission to America*, pp. 75-110.

379 His idea resembles the Bahai's idea of Progressive Revelation, which is the concept that God sends messengers and messages to human beings as needed. To the Bahais, Bahaullah is the Prophet of the present age, but there will be other prophets to come in future.

380 *Ibid.*, p. 80, quoting "Noble Drew Ali: A Centennial Remembrance (1886-1986) mimeograph.

381 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

382 *Ibid.*, p. 80, quoting a pamphlet, which advertises a parent/child development seminar in Newark conducted by the Moorish Institute in 1984.

patterned more on Eastern philosophies than on normative Islam.³⁸³ Even though his members recognized Friday as a holy day in Islam, they did not offer Friday prayers or the daily five prayers. Neither did they pay *Zakat* to the poor or fast in the month of *Ramadan*. They may have been encouraged to visit Mecca for pilgrimage, though, when they were financially capable.³⁸⁴

On the basis of the above, Sunni (orthodox) Muslims consider Ali's group non-Muslim. In truth, he made only a few references to the Arabic *Qur'an* in his work and did rely on the Bible and quotations from other religious scriptures.³⁸⁵ Nonetheless, this movement contributed positively to the shaping of the African American mentality at a time when many were confused about their identities, their religion and their future. He gave them hope and affirmed their worthiness to them.³⁸⁶

There is no doubt that the Moorish American movement exemplifies, in the true historical and traditional sense, the perpetual struggle of Black Americas to extricate themselves for the mental, economic, spiritual and moral subjugations.³⁸⁷

Ali died in Chicago on July 20, 1929 of tuberculosis. Some said he died from the beating he received while in custody before he was released for his alleged connection to the death of Sheikh Claude Green, his rival in leadership of the Moorish Temple, who was shot dead on March 15,

383 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

384 *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

385 For more information see: Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African American Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997) p. 93. Richard Turner argues that N. Drew Ali draws the content of his Koran from four sources: the *Qur'an* (Islamic Scriptures), Bible, the Aquarian Gospels of Jesus Christ an occult version of the New Testament, and "Unto thee I grant, (literature of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood), a Masonic order which was influenced by love concerning the Egyptian mystery Schools."

386 In addition he instructed his members about their various duties: the duties to oneself, to husband, to wives, and how they should be responsible for one another. Mostly, Drew's teachings are expressed in general terms; they are nonspecific. See Amina B. McCloud, *African American Islam*, (N.Y.: Routledge, 1995), pp.15-17.

387 Rashad, p. 175.

1929.³⁸⁸ With the death of Ali, the Moorish Temple suffered a great setback. Prominent members of the Moorish Temple fought and killed one another to become its leader, and eventually many were put in jail. Ironically, the movement did not die - it survived. The remaining few members carried the message forward and are still functioning in some major cities of the United States today, despite government attempts to weaken them.³⁸⁹

On the other hand, while the Moorish Temple had a remarkable social program and nonviolent approach, African American church leaders in the 1920s and 30s gave it no recognition. Ali and his group were totally marginalized. Some orthodox Muslims in the U.S. also ignored the Moorish movement and labeled it a racist group. The Moorish Temple itself made no reference to Muslims who were not Blacks. Nevertheless, Ali's contributions to Islam in the U.S. cannot be understated, as pointed out by Richard Turner.

No matter how bizarre his ideas may appear in retrospect, he introduced thousands of Black people to Islam early in the twentieth century. Because of his ideas, Black American developed a global perspective on race and politics in the context of his version of Islam. Drew Ali's religious imagination was boundless, and his esoteric vision of Islam brought the religion from the elite international circles of Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb into American popular culture, where it would eventually thrive in spite of harassment by the federal government.³⁹⁰

The Birth of the Nation of ISLAM

Wallace Fard (1887-?) was a white Muslim who founded what is known today as the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam is a Muslim movement that began in the early 1930s in the United States.. Wallace Fard's origins are unclear and in fact controversial. According to his successor, Elijah Muhammad, Wallace Fard first appeared in Detroit,

388 Turner, p. 100

389 *Ibid.*, pp. 101-107.

390 *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8.

Michigan in July 1930 on Independence Day. He claimed to be God incarnated who was sent to Black people to redeem them and teach them knowledge of themselves, God and the devil.³⁹¹ The word "devil" specifically referred to White people. Little is known about the early life and career of Wallace Fard, who often changed his name and titles.

W. Fard was said to be an Arab peddler in the Black community in Detroit. He went from door to door to sell his products and took the opportunity to speak to the Blacks about their origins. He finally introduced his own version of Islam to them with his own interpretation twists. He rapidly gained many followers, among them was Elijah Muhammad.³⁹²

Fard's mission lasted for four years before he disappeared in 1934 without any trace. However, Elijah Muhammad thought Wallace was God and the awaited messiah (*mahdi*). Elijah Muhammad claimed to have recognized him and understood him better than himself. The teachings of W. Fard centered on helping Blacks to recognize the importance of their pure origin. He told them that they had been cut off from themselves and from God. Their success, he argued, lies in knowing themselves and in linking themselves with God through Islam, which is their heritage and religion. He also taught them to be hard-working, thrifty, and respectful of their families. He encouraged them to conduct their businesses with honesty and dignity, and to avoid eating pork and drinking alcohol, which Islam forbids.³⁹³

Ironically, few scholars and American historians mention the fact that Wallace Fard was a white person. As Smith points out, his obscure situation could have led to doubtfulness, but Blacks instead accepted this as a sign of the truthfulness of his message rather than of suspicion.³⁹⁴ How did a movement founded by a White person come to be so antagonistic to the White race? Wallace Fard may have been playing on the Black mentality and sensitivity when he said:

391 Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple # 2, 1965), p. 20.

392 Turner, p. 148.

393 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

394 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 81.

The Black men in North America are not Negroes, but members of the lost tribe of Shabazz, stolen by traders from the Holy City of Mecca 379 years ago. The Prophet came to America to find and bring back to his long lost brethren, from whom the Caucasians had taken away their language, their nation, and their religion. Here in America, they were living other than themselves. They must learn that they are the original people, noblest of the nations of the earth. The Caucasians are the colored people, since they lost their original color. The original people must regain their religion, which is Islam, their language, which is Arabic, and their culture, which is astronomy and higher mathematics, especially calculus. They must live according to the law of *Allah*, avoiding all meat of 'poison animals,' hogs, ducks, geese, possums, and catfish. They must give up completely the use of stimulants, especially liquor. They must clean themselves up—both their bodies and their houses. If in this way they obeyed *Allah*, he would take them back to the Paradise from which they had been stolen—the holy city of Mecca.³⁹⁵

The Emergence of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975)

With the disappearance of Wallace Fard in 1934, the death of Noble Drew Ali in 1929, the deportation of Marcus Garvey in 1927,³⁹⁶ and the slowing down of the activities of the Ahmadiyyah movement in 1930, a new Black Messiah came to the scene. At that time, there was no dynamic leader and no religious political movement in America

395 Turner, p. 151, quoting Benjamin Erdmann "Voodoo Cult Among Negro Migrants in Detroit," p. 267 in the *American Journal of Sociology* 43 (July 1937-May 1938): 894-907. See also W. D. Fard, *Teaching for the Lost Found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way, Problem Number 30*. The source of this pamphlet is not mentioned. It has no date.

396 Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican activist and nationalist who founded the Universal Negro Movement Association. He advocated the unity of all Africans and that they should go back to Africa because Africa is their home land. Unfortunately, he himself did not go back or visit Africa before he died.

to articulate and speak for pan-African issues.³⁹⁷ It was at this time that one of the most charismatic Black leaders in America came to the scene in the person of Elijah Poole, who was later known as Honorable Elijah Muhammad. He was born in Bolts Springs, Georgia on October 7, 1897. He grew up there, married and had children. Then he moved to Detroit, Michigan, where he worked at a Chevrolet auto plant for some years before losing his job during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It was in Michigan that he heard the strange teachings of Wallace Fard, which were introduced to him by his wife, Sister Clara. Elijah Muhammad attended Wallace Fard's lectures and became a member. On August 31, 1931, it was reported that Elijah Poole listened to W. Fard's lecture, after which Elijah went to W. Fard and declared to him:

'I know who you are, you're God himself.' Fard replied 'That's right, but don't tell it now. It is not yet time for me to be known.'³⁹⁸

When Elijah called Wallace God, Wallace Fard conferred on Elijah Muhammad the title of "Prophet." Elijah Muhammad became Fard's chief minister of Islam and his successor after his disappearance. Elijah Muhammad found Fard's lectures and message very impressive and emotionally evocative. He admired Fard's explicit discussion of the psychological damage that slavery had done to Black Americans, which caused them to lose touch with their original identities as Asiatic African people. He believed in all that Fard was saying, even though some of Fard's statements can be considered incoherent.

It may be that Wallace Fard disappeared when the Nation of Islam (NOI) became a real racist group whose members were all Blacks. Perhaps Wallace Fard could not them anymore. He may also have been scared of being among the Blacks he raised but whose hatred for White people had gone beyond measure. Therefore, he willingly surrendered leadership of the NOI to Elijah Muhammad, the right leader at the right time, the prophet of the Blacks. When the latter took over, he restructured the NOI and won many new members. He later moved the headquarters of the NOI to Chicago, where he

397 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

398 Clifton Marsh, *From Black Muslim to Muslims: The Transition from Separation to Islam, 1930-1980* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1984), p. 53; See also Muhammad Speaks Special issue, April 1972.

restructured the NOI with high-level authority and turned it into a separatist group with anti-White slogans to counter what Blacks experienced in America.

He established a hierarchy [of leadership] with himself at the head. Under him were ministers, supreme captains, captains, lieutenants and secretaries. Interested members had to apply before joining the NOI and upon their acceptance, a name would be assigned to them with the addition of an 'X' to signify their unknown African ancestry in spite of their claim, as taught by Wallace Fard, that they were of Asiatic origin. They never saw any contradiction in claiming dual identity: African and Asian.³⁹⁹

The Objectives of the Nation of Islam

Elijah helped the Blacks to understand themselves, their history, and their roles in America, which was and still is a predominantly White society. He gave them new identity and encouraged them to be independent. He outlined his goals for the NOI in what he called the "*Muslim Program and What the Muslims Want*." He said:

- We want freedom.
- We want justice and equal justice under the law.
- We want equality of opportunity.
- We want our own people in America whose parents or grandparents were descendants from slaves, to be allowed to establish a separate state or territory of their own—either on this continent or elsewhere. We believe that our former slaveholders are obligated to provide such land and that the area must be fertile and rich in mineral.
- We want freedom for all believers of Islam now held in federal prisons.
- We want an immediate end to the police brutality and mob attacks against the so-called Negro throughout the United States.

399 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 82.

- As long as we are not allowed to establish a state or territory of our own, we demand not only equal justice under the laws of the United States, but equal employment opportunities – now.
- We want the government of the United States to exempt our people from all taxation as long as we are deprived of equal justice under the laws of the land.
- We want equal education – but separate schools up to 16 for boys and 18 for girls on the condition that the girls be sent to women's colleges and universities.
- We believe that intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited. We want the religion of Islam taught without hindrance or suppression.⁴⁰⁰

Elijah Muhammad claimed that he based his new ideology on Islam and appealed to people on that ground. Yet he and his followers disregarded the practices of true Islam, which rest on the five pillars. Nevertheless, he taught his followers Islamic values: to be hard-working and hold high respect for women and parents. He said:

The woman is man's field to produce his nation. If he does not keep the enemy out of his field, he won't produce a good nation ... She is the first nurse. She's your teacher. Your first lesson comes from your mother. If you don't protect your mother, how do you think you look in the eyes of other human beings? ... We protect our farms by pulling out weeds and grass by the roots, by killing animals and birds, and by poisoning the insects that destroy our crops in order that we may produce a good crop. How much more valuable are our women, who are our fields through whom we produce our nation?⁴⁰¹

Further, the NOI encouraged education and established several schools known as Sister Clara Muhammad School for children from

400 McCloud, *African American Islam*, 1995, pp. 30-31.

401 Adib Rashad, pp. 181-2, quoting *Elijah Muhammad's Message to the Blackman in America*, pp. 58-60.

Kindergarden to 12 grade with a highly organized curriculum. It paid more attention to education than any other Black institutions in the U.S.. Although the NOI is said to have established the University of Islam in Detroit in 1934, this is a high school and not a college degree offering institution, as many assume. The NOI also launched small business and training programs for girls. The small businesses were to allow members to be economically independent. Also, men received instruction on self-defense through the *Fruit of Islam*, which is a paramilitary section of the NOI.

Elijah Muhammad Went to Jail

Elijah Muhammad worked hard for his movement throughout his life. He was jailed between 1942 and 1946 for draft evasion, but not because of any violent crime. He wondered why Blacks should fight for America and be killed when the American government itself did not recognize or respect them as human beings. He continued to win followers from within the prison in Michigan, and his wife, Sister Clara, acted as his secretary during his absence. It was through her that Elijah's messages were delivered to the ministers and captains.⁴⁰² After his release in 1946, he built the NOI and devoted the rest of his life to his movement. Elijah Muhammad died in 1975. Before his death, he appointed his son Warithu-Deen Mohammed to be his successor. His immediate ministers and captains were unhappy with that appointment. Imam Mohammed took over and drastically changed nearly everything that his father had built. He continued to move toward mainstream Islam until the orthodox Muslims in America recognized the NOI as a viable, independent Muslim community.

It has been said that the NOI during the time of Elijah Muhammad represented everything except true Islam. Its leadership appealed to people in the name of Islam but those who called themselves members did not practice Islam. Nonetheless, it is to the credit of the NOI that Islam was brought to the larger American public. Of course, there were many Muslims from the Middle East already there in Michigan, the birthplace of the NOI in the 1930s, but the Arab Muslims were non-vocal and did not propagate Islam in public. These immigrants

402 Turner, pp. 168-9.

were less concerned about religion; like many other immigrants, their primary purpose was to accumulate wealth.

Turner calls attention to a few features that characterized the success of the NOI among African Americans. Among them is the idea that the NOI is not really a racist movement, as many may conceive.

Unlike with supremacist movements in America and Europe in 1930s', the Black racial separatist Muslims did not develop programs of genocides for racial outsiders. Instead the latter's racial supremacy was a defensive stance to counter racial discrimination and atrocities against Black Americans. Basically the NOI wanted to be left alone.⁴⁰³ In other words, the NOI is not K.K.K. The NOI leaders frowned on any members who attempted to do so.

He points out too that the NOI was launched originally by an Asian and not by the Blacks. Also, that by its nature it indicated that it was not an anti-White movement. Clearly, though, members did not like the White Americans and Europeans who had enslaved Blacks for many years and justified such slavery as divine justice for the sins committed by Ham, one of the sons of Adam.

In Elijah Muhammad's last years, he allowed Whites to be members of the NOI but he did not invite White scholars to speak to the Blacks on NOI's podium. The change of attitude, that not all White people are evil, may be the result of his experience and encounter with White people during his pilgrimage to Mecca in December 1957. There, as his minister Malcolm X experienced in 1964, Elijah came face-to-face with White Muslims from all over the world, praying together in the same line without any discrimination. He expressed his experience of praying at Mecca thus:

Such a prayer service I have never witnessed before –being with these thousands of sincere worshipers of God, His religion and Muhammad, this prophet. On encircling it (*Ka'aba*) for the last time, the pilgrim makers are asked to kiss the Black stone. There before my eyes, were the many hands of pilgrims trying to reach for the

stone. This I will never forget. I'll never forget *Allah* for blessing me to make this pilgrimage.⁴⁰⁴

It is astonishing that many scholars do not know that Elijah Muhammad performed Hajj. However, his son, Imam Warithu-Deen Mohammed, confirmed that his father did indeed perform Hajj.

Critique of Elijah Muhammad and the NOI

Without doubt, the NOI made a tremendous impact upon the lives of many African Americans, not on just Muslims but also on non-Muslims. Elijah was able to bring out many Blacks from the ghettos and gave them a new identity. For the first time in Black American history, many of them were proud of being human and loved themselves. He was able to convince them that they could attain success and live better lives by changing their attitudes, committing themselves to hard work, and supporting one another. "Think Black, buy Black and sell Black," he used to encourage his followers. Due to his efforts, the majority of Muslims today in America are African Americans. Undoubtedly, the NOI played a unique role in meeting the needs of significant numbers of African Americans.⁴⁰⁵

However, there are certain areas in which Elijah Muhammad has been criticized. These include his conception of God and his understanding of prophethood. Perhaps the idea of man becoming God is something that Elijah Muhammad brought to the movement from his Christian background, where he had been indoctrinated that God, the father, incarnated in the son, Jesus. Therefore, for any person to be doing God's will on earth and saving Blacks from the atrocities of the White people, the slaveholders, such a person must be God incarnated. That is why when Elijah Muhammad believed in the beginning that Wallace Fard was God; he was not alone; Noble Drew Ali claimed the same before. This way of thinking is also found among many African American Christians and Rastafarians who believe very strongly that Emperor Haile Selassie was God incarnated. But from an Islamic point of view, the belief that any human being is God nullifies the belief in the unity of God, *Tawheed*.

404 Adib Rashad, pp. 182-183, quoting *Salaam Magazine*, July 1960, vol. 1, no. 1 p. 33.

405 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 81.

403 Turner, p. 158.

Also, Elijah Muhammad's belief that he was a prophet contradicts the second part of Islamic basic beliefs, the witness that Muhammad of Arabia was the messenger of God and the last prophet. Because of this contradiction and confusion in Elijah Muhammad's concepts of God and of the prophet, orthodox Sunni Muslims disowned him and never gave him any support or respect. Some actually perceived him a non-believer. "They accused him of illicit innovation and, and indeed, heresy."⁴⁰⁶ They condemned him as a heretic and warned other Muslims not to join his movement. Elijah Muhammad paid no attention to this babbling attack because he thought that immigrant Muslims had no significant effect on Americans, and understood that they had not gone through what the Black slaves had experienced in America. Abdul-Basit Naeem says in response to this accusation on behalf of Elijah Muhammad:

I am of course, fully aware of the fact that some of the teachings of Mr. Elijah Muhammad ... would not be acceptable to Moslems in the East without, perhaps, some sort of explanation by the author or by someone who can interpret them well. As he told me a few months ago, 'My brothers in the East were never subject to the conditions of slavery and systematic brain washing by the slaveholders for a long period of time as my people here were subjected. I cannot, therefore, blame them if they differ with me in certain interpretations of the message of Islam.'⁴⁰⁷

Another criticism against the NOI was its belief that White people are devils. In Islam, all human beings and all races are equal before God. Therefore the teachings that White people are descended from the devil and that the Blacks are the chosen children of God contradicts the teachings of Islam. Perhaps Elijah Muhammad used that ideology to boost the morale of the Blacks and prove to them that Blacks are not only human beings and but even superior to the White race. However, he changed his rhetoric towards the end of his life by speaking to Whites

and allowing them to attend his lectures. That change of attitude might have come after his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1957, where he found that Black and White Muslims prayed together and interacted with one another peacefully.

Finally, the NOI was accused of not adhering to the five pillars of Islam. Despite the fact that many members believed Wallace Fard was God and Elijah Muhammad was the prophet for the Blacks, a majority of NOI members at that time were not even observing the five daily prayers. They were not taught how to read the *Qur'an* in Arabic, although each member had to have a copy of the *Qur'an*, not for reading, but for decoration and membership purposes. In addition, members were not instructed to fast during the month of *Ramadan*. They observed fasting in December every year. Also, the majority of members did not pay *Zakat* to the poor, but to Elijah Muhammad, who in turn distributed what he collected to whomever he wanted.

Many did not comprehend the concept of *Zakat*, and so were instructed to give their shares to the Nation of Islam. Ironically, everything was done and advocated in the name of Islam when in fact they were not practicing Islam, and the *Qur'an* never became the constitution of their daily lives. They picked from it what suited them. For instance, members of the NOI were discouraged from eating pork, consuming alcoholic beverages, gambling, or using drugs. At the same time, the NOI forbade intermarriage with White people so as to maintain the purity of the Black race, an idea that is totally alien to Islam. But should the Nation of Islam be blamed for all the misgivings and misunderstanding of true Islam and racism? McCloud says no, because,

Historically, Islam comes to already formed cultures, moralizes them, and directs them to the workings of God. For African Americans leaders, however, nationhood was not pre-given, and their primary concern was building a nation for their oppressed people. This emphasis over nation building, over the universalizing process of Islam risked alienation from the broader family of Islam, but was rationalized by prevailing conditions in America. For African American Muslims at the turn of the century, there was a need to

⁴⁰⁶ Amina McCloud, quoting *The Supreme Wisdom* (Newport News Va: The National Newport News and Commentator, 1957), p. 30.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 32, quoting Elijah Muhammad..

focus on the plight of Black people in the United States and the daily injustices heaped on them. The tactics and beliefs used [by African American Muslim leaders] to break the ties with the larger society was seen as necessary to bring the process culture formation, as was the designation of a contemporary messenger of God.⁴⁰⁸

Again, despite all this criticism, it is admitted that Muslim leaders in the Muslim world directly or indirectly recognized the Nation of Islam as the major outpost for Islam in the Western world. And Elijah Muhammad was aware of this. Thus, in 1959, he sent Malcolm X to the Middle East and West Africa to win their sympathy; Malcolm X came back victorious.⁴⁰⁹ The Arab Muslims did not really oppose what the NOI was doing. They considered the movement a victory for Islam anyway and were tolerant of the NOI's mistakes involving racial-separatist ideologies. Official Muslims in Cairo said to the leaders of the NOI:

Of course your Black Muslims are improperly informed. But they are turning men to *Allah*, away from Christianity, towards Mecca. This is what we want. That is what we must have. We need new blood in Western Islam. If (Elijah) Muhammad can give that new blood, we welcome him. As for his teachings we ... will see to it that the correct views are given to the Black men in America. Now the thing is to get them facing Mecca.⁴¹⁰

Malcolm X: The Umar of the 20th Century of Islam in America

There is a strong belief in Islam that God molds the lives of his creatures the way He wants and that no one actually knows what lies in the future for anyone. No one would believe in the early 1940s that

Malcolm X, *the Red*, would be a respectful guest of honor at Harvard University in the 1960s or a spokesman and ambassador of African Americans to the leaders of Arab and African countries. The prevailing assumption is that he who does not receive formal education or he who ends up in jail for drugs, stealing or other crimes can hardly make it in life in America. But this was not the case with Malcolm X. God endowed human beings with the *will* to change their lives and that is exactly what happened to Malcolm X. Nearly everyone he came across during his teenage years predicted that he would never achieve greatness in his life. Some of his teachers knew that he was brilliant, yet they did not encourage him. They despised him and failed to inspire him to live up to his potential. Malcolm X proved all of them wrong. He recreated himself, reeducated himself and managed his life by himself. We do not know any of his teachers who are more famous than he was. Friends and foes, scholars and novelists, filmmakers, and screenwriters, have written extensively about Malcolm X and nearly every year a new book reaches the market about him. But who was Malcolm X?

Malcolm Little was born in Omaha, Nebraska on May 19, 1925 to Earl and Louise Norton Little, who were both members of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.⁴¹¹ Malcolm Little had a rough beginning as his parents moved from one city to another in search of a decent life. However, due to his parents' involvement in Black Nationalism under Marcus Garvey, he was aware of the plight of the Black from an early age. He attended meetings with his father and witnessed hot discussions and debates among Blacks. Malcolm attended high school but was unable to complete his education; he dropped out in the 9th grade. He worked many places to earn some money. His father was said to have been killed by the K.K.K. Since his mother was unable to support him financially, he and his brother were put into the custody of others. When his sister Ella won his custody, she brought Malcolm to Boston to live with her. Soon he left his sister's home, eventually becoming a street person and a criminal.

He indulged in various forms of vice and crime. He attributed his crimes to his anger with the White society, which deprived him his legitimate rights and which had so demoralized and devalued Blacks.⁴¹² He ended up in jail in 1946 for stealing; that was the same year that

411 Turner, p. 176.

412 Smith, p. 85.

408 McCloud, pp. 39-40.

409 Turner, p. 191.

410 Turner, p. 192, quoting Louis E. Lomax, *When the Word is Given: A Report on Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X and the Black Muslim World*, (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1963), p. 66.

Elijah Muhammad left prison for draft evasion. Malcolm served seven years at Norfolk prison.

It was while he was in prison that he became aware of the Nation of Islam through his brothers, who had become members of the NOI. After he was convinced about Islam, he wrote to Elijah Muhammad, who responded to him and encouraged him to hold on to Islam. He also sent him \$5.00 with a note. This was the turning point in his life, as Malcolm himself later confessed. He found prayer very difficult to perform, but kept trying. He dedicated his time in prison to reading whatever he could lay his hands on. He developed himself intellectually and became eloquent and well informed. Within a short time, he became an ardent follower of Elijah Muhammad and eventually spread the message of the Nation of Islam in prison and won many followers. He submitted himself to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad as he understood it and wholeheartedly accepted him as his spiritual guide. Upon his release from jail in 1952, Elijah Muhammad welcomed Malcolm and soon appointed him as one of his ministers. "X" was added to his name. Malcolm X began to recruit new members to the NOI. He was very eloquent and successful in winning over the youths. Elijah Muhammad found in him great ability and energy, thus, rewarded him with rapid promotion until he became the spokesman for the NOI. Malcolm was a great leader and debater, who expressed himself well and said whatever was on his mind. To be more serviceable to the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad sent him from one city to another and allowed him to establish new Temples as he deemed fit. Malcolm became famous. He delivered lectures to diverse groups: to students, professors, Muslims and non-Muslims, Black elites, and to street people. He continuously emphasized, particularly in the early 1960s, that his message was to unite African Americans from the oppression of the White people. Blacks listened to him attentively and strongly believed that he could help them get out of their predicaments.

What you and I need to do is learn to forget our differences. When we come together, we don't come together as Baptists or Methodists. You can't catch hell because you're a Baptist, and you don't catch hell because you're a Methodist. You don't catch hell because you're a Democratic or a Republican, you don't catch

hell because you're a Mason or an Elk, and you sure don't catch hell because you're an American, because if you were an American, you wouldn't catch hell. *You catch hell because you're a Black man.* We have this in common: we have a common oppressor, a common exploiter, and a common discriminator. But once we all realize that we have a common enemy, then we unite on the basis of what we have in common. And what we have foremost in common is that enemy – the white man.⁴¹³

This speech had lasting impression and effect on his audience. Malcolm X understood the real psychology of Black people and exploited it. Within a short time, he became renowned and was an object of jealousy as his mentor, Elijah Muhammad, had forewarned him.

Brother Malcolm, I want you to become well known. Because if you are well known, it will make me better known ... But Brother Malcolm, there is something you need to know. You will grow to be hated when you become well known because usually people get jealous of public figures.⁴¹⁴

These warnings came true within a few years. Although there is no convincing evidence that Elijah Muhammad himself was jealous of Malcolm X, some followers of Elijah Muhammad were suspicious that Malcolm would become Elijah's successor if he were not curbed. Eventually, they ignited tension between Elijah and Malcolm until the latter was excommunicated from the Nation of Islam in January 1964 for three months and then permanently. Elijah excommunicated Malcolm X because of his comments about the death of President John Kennedy. Elijah gave the order that none of his ministers should make any derogative statements about Kennedy's death, Malcolm X ignored that order and described the death as the "*chicken coming home to roost*" in his lecture on December 4, 1963 in New York City.

413 Turner, p. 208, quoting Porcittman, ed. *Malcolm X Speaks*, pp. 3-4.

414 *Ibid.*, p. 209, quoting Strickland and Greene, *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*, pp. 90-91.

It should be pointed out here that the idea of excommunication, which was often used by the NOI, is borrowed from Christianity to punish the defiant. It is an alien concept to Islam because no Muslim should be banned from coming to mosque or attending Islamic prayer at any time. The mosque belongs to every Muslim. Until today, some leaders in the Nation of Islam, as well as followers of Imam Warithu-Deen Mohammad, occasionally ban members from attending the mosque for one reason or another. Muslim scholars contend that this is an un-Islamic practice that stems from a lack of proper understanding of Islam.

The Turning Point in Malcolm X's life

In 1964, three months after his banning from the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X performed a pilgrimage to Mecca. That pilgrimage had a lasting impact upon his life. In Mecca he met Muslims from all over the world and was impressed with their sense of friendship and mutual respect for one another. He immediately recognized that his understanding of Islam as an exclusive religion of the Black race was wrong. At Mecca, White people who were performing the pilgrimage outnumbered Blacks. His perception about racism was challenged.

He could no longer lend credence to the Yacub myth of the Nation of Islam and now he understood racism primarily as economical and political consequences of capitalism.⁴¹⁵

Malcolm writes in his memoir during his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964:

America needs to understand Islam because this is the one religion that erases from its society the racial problems. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered 'white' – but the 'white' attitude was removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color. You may be shocked by these

⁴¹⁵ Turner, p. 215.

words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to *re-arrange* much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to *toss aside* some of my previous conclusions. This was not too difficult for me. Despite my firm convictions, I have been always a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it. I have always kept an open mind, which is necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth.⁴¹⁶

The color-blindness of the Muslim world's religious society and the color blindness of the Muslim world's human society; these two influences had each day been making a greater impact, and an increasing persuasion against my previous way of thinking. ... There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. There were all colors, from blue-eyed lodes to Black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white.⁴¹⁷

After his return from Mecca, he had a drastic change of his attitude toward White people. He was unable to convince Elijah Muhammad to change, yet many members of the NOI embraced Malcolm's new ideology of inclusiveness and the new understanding of Islam he

⁴¹⁶ Adib Rashad, pp. 193-4, quoting Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. 2nd ed. (N. Y.: Ballantine, 1999), p. 371.

⁴¹⁷ Turner, p. 215, quoting *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley, pp. 370-371. Turner comments that Malcolm X was unable to recognize the racial separatism that was available in the Muslim world. It should be pointed out that there is racism everywhere but not on the basis of skin color in the Muslim world. Many Arabs are not White and any Black can attain any level of education and reach any high position in the government. Thus the allegation that racial separation had deep roots in the Islamic world is an uncritical statement which emerges from lack of interaction with Muslims even in the United States.

proffered. Malcolm continued to adjust and comply with Islamic teachings and assisted interested Blacks in adjusting too. Unfortunately, assassins killed Malcolm X on February 21, 1965. Members of the Nation of Islam and the C.I.A were suspected of masterminding the killing. Although he was given a Muslim burial, many Muslim Sunnis did not attend his funeral, which was held at a church because members of the NOI had been warned not to attend his burial. What a tragedy!

The Genius of Malcolm X

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Malcolm X was the Umar of Islam in 20th century America. His rough beginning in life informed him early about the plight of African Americans in a society dominated by the White man. As a child of his time and environment, he could not escape what ordinary African American males go through in America: poverty, lack of education, dealing with drugs and committing crimes, which frequently leads them to prison. However, Malcolm went through all these predicaments and came out of jail (Malcolm's academy) a refined and reformed human being, and never went back to jail again. Further, Malcolm recognized the importance of education and educated himself until he excelled. It was in prison that he read Western and Eastern philosophy and literature, works on Christianity and the history of African American slavery.

His great achievement was his ability to recognize change and adapt to it without feeling encumbered by his past mistakes. He was a leader, a vehicle of change and an agent of progress and peace, and his status was based on the written word rather than on the power of the sword. The greatest gift he offered to the African American was the gift of self esteem and self development. He asserted and proved that any African American can be whatever he wants to be in America, that his destiny is in his hands and that any individual can free himself. He paid little attention to his critics and was aware of the threat he posed to the NOI and to the American government, in particular, by awakening in Black peoples the courage to speak out and ask, fight, and die for their rights.

Malcolm must be studied and re-studied simply because he did mean many things to many people, and because

he epitomized so much of what the world is lacking today. He represented integrity, morality, courage, strength, ethics, and a dedication to progressive change.⁴¹⁸

Imam Warithu-Deen Mohammad: The Advocate of Islamic Orthodoxy in America

Before Elijah Muhammad died in February 1975, he appointed his son Warithu Deen Mohammed as his successor. Elijah wanted leadership of the NOI to remain within his family. He had prepared his son for the position by equipping him with a quality education in Arabic and Islamic studies. When Warithu Deen was young, his father recruited an Arab to teach him the Arabic language and Islamic knowledge. It is said that Warithu Deen studied in the Middle East and performed pilgrimage to Mecca in 1967. Due to his early exposure to orthodox Islam, he was aware of his father's misguided approach to Islam. Warithu Deen confessed that his father was a good person who was sincere in his struggle to free African Americans from the evils of the White, but believed his father's approach and teachings of Islam were wrong.

It will sound strange that a man who came with something far from the true picture of Islam would be given credit for bringing true Islam into the country or being a factor for that true image coming to light. I say that because I know the Honorable Elijah Muhammad had a private side to himself. On his private side, he embraced Muslims from all over the world and wanted them to accept him. ... So I am convinced that there were two sides to my father, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. One side was angry with the White world for its evils toward Black people, and the other side was

418 Adib Rashad, p. 194. Spike Lee's acclaimed film *Malcolm X* in 1992 has generated the most varied discussions of Malcolm since his death. Both Muslims and non-Muslims watched the film and Malcolm X became a symbol of courage and a role model for many African Americans. His legacy will never be forgotten in the history of religion in America.

this Muslim man who wanted to be accepted by all Muslims but was teaching a strange idea of Islam.⁴¹⁹

Imam Warithu Deen was born in 1933 in Hamtramck, Michigan and was named Wallace, after his father's mentor, Wallace Fard, who disappeared a year later.⁴²⁰ It is strange that Wallace Elijah was born in Islam but was not given an Islamic name. Imam Mohammed received a high school education and learned Arabic and *Qur'an* at an early age. He was one of the handful of brothers who could read the *Qur'an* in Arabic among all members of the Nation of Islam. Since he received an authentic Islamic education, he grew up with Islamic ideas totally different from his father. Thus, in the 1960s, he enjoyed his association with Malcolm X and supported him. Eventually, Warithu Deen was excommunicated in 1964. In 1974, he was re-admitted back into the NOI and groomed by his father to become his successor. He was assigned different leadership positions and proved to be a good minister of peace and progress to African American Muslims.

Upon his father's death in February 1975, Warithu Deen Mohammed became the leader of the NOI. He assumed the responsibilities with maturity and diligence and immediately made radical and drastic changes in the administrative structure of the organization. Many people thought he would follow his father's rhetoric of anti-White but he did not. He appreciated all the good that his father had done, but insisted that there was a dire need for change and new approach. He diligently carved his own philosophy without really condemning the old ways or accusing individuals. He was an angel of change who moved the NOI toward orthodox Islam. His ideas were met with relentless attack both from within and from without. His own family and siblings thought that he was selling out the Nation of Islam.

419 Adib Rashad, pp. 221-222, quoting an interview with Imam Warithu Deen Mohammad at the British Broadcast Corporation (BBC), pamphlet published by Islam Community Relations, P. O. Box 8124, Hyattsville, M. D 20787, 1994.

420 Imam W. D. Mohammed claims that he used to talk with Wallace Fard until 1990s. It was in 1993 that he announced that W. Fard had died. Before that, W. Fard was an Imam in California under W. D. Mohammed's direction. See Adib Rashad, p. 227.

When Imam Wallace [W.D. Mohammed] introduced his reformation, many true believers found it necessary for the first time to re-examine their reasons for belonging and to assess their existing satisfactions and the probabilities for improvement or decline in the future. Some did not like what they saw or thought they saw and left the movement.⁴²¹

And in reality, that was what he did; he made changes. He strongly believed that the NOI was based on wrong foundations of racism and separatism, which Islam does not condone. Islam, he asserted, is a religion for all humanity regardless of skin colors and races; it is for both the rich and the poor.

Imam Mohammed and Rebuilding the Nation of Islam

Imam Mohammed actually sat in the seat of Elijah Muhammad as his successor, but he walked his own path. He debugged his father's mystery. When he became the leader of the NOI, he cautiously educated his followers that Wallace Fard was not God and that his father was not a prophet. He told people that his father had not received revelation from God. All the teachings that Wallace Fard taught the Black were not new to them, he argued. But W. Fard addressed them in a different way. These ideas he espoused were borrowed from Black leaders' ideas and did not stem at all from Wallace Fard.

The idea of Nation was with Marcus Garvey before it was with Fard. ..The idea of Asiatics and original people was with Drew Ali before it was with Fard. .. The idea of doing business in a big way and going overseas and importing and exporting was with Paul Cuffe before it was with W. D. Fard. ... The pronouncement of judgment on the White world came from David Walker and Elijah Lovejoy before it came from Fard. And I can go on and on and on. The attention to mis-education

421 C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Trenton, N. J.: The Africa World Press, Inc., 1994), p. 266.

and re-education came from Carter G. Woodson before it came from Fard.

Even the unreal things that we boast about: Father Divine claimed to be a 'Black god' before Fard taught it. Daddy Grace claimed divinity and he didn't get it from Fard. Marcus Garvey got a new appreciation for Christianity when he discovered that not only a White man could 'play god' but a Black man could 'play god' too. It was documented that he indicated that 'man was god' and that 'the only god' that his people should look at was him, 'until another god comes.' That was what Marcus Garvey claimed. I don't think we need anything but the truth. Remember that old statement: 'The truth will set you free.' By God, I buy that. Racist identity must not make weak and defective our humanity toward self and humanity toward others.⁴²²

From these quotations, it is inferred that both Wallace Fard and Elijah Muhammad reiterated what Black leaders had preached before. Thus, if Wallace Fard were to be considered God because of his exposition of these ideas, all those Black leaders would be considered gods as well. Of course, some did call themselves gods. On the other hand, if Wallace Fard was claiming to be a real god, then he was wrong.

Some African American Muslims did not welcome the ideas of Imam Mohammed in the beginning. Consequently, many old members of the NOI deserted him as they perceived him a destroyer of his father's empire and glory. In the beginning, Minister Louis Farrakhan pretended to be Imam Mohammed's supporter but in 1978 renounced him and re-invented the old Nation of Islam as espoused by Elijah Muhammad. He renewed the rhetoric of separatism by holding Whites responsible for all the problems of Blacks in the U.S. Imam Mohammed did not buy into the racist idea of seeing all White people as evil. He encouraged his followers to embrace White people as fellow human beings and invite them to become Muslims and members of the Nation of Islam. Imam Mohammed worked hard so as not to

create war and confrontations between his followers and the followers of Minister Louis Farrakhan.

The second drastic change that Imam Mohammed embarked upon was converting temples into mosques. Ironically, in the Nation of Islam, members attended temples to listen to their leaders, but Imam Mohammed turned them into mosques, places of worship of *Allah*, where Islamic daily prayers (*Salat*) are offered. In the beginning, it was extremely hard on his followers to bow their heads to *Allah* and to kneel because they were not used to praying in this way. Even Malcolm X found it hard to prostrate and kneel at Mecca in 1964. But gradually, and upon his insistence, they began to offer the five daily prayers. By extension, they started learning the Arabic language and memorizing some chapters of the *Qur'an* so as to recite them in their daily prayers. They gradually recognized one God, *Allah*, and confessed that Muhammad bin Abdullah, the Prophet of Arabia, was the real and last prophet of God and not Elijah Muhammad of America.

Thirdly, he strengthened the existing Sister Clara Schools, changed its curriculum and equipped it with necessary support to deliver its message and provide quality educations for Muslim students, which enabled them to gain admission to colleges and universities in the U.S. Imam Mohammed invested much in educating the youth. He believed that it is through proper and quality education, knowledge of Islam and the teaching of Islamic values that the new generation would understand and appreciate Islam, and take their due roles in American society. To Imam Mohammed, knowledge coupled with piety and hard work is the surest road to success in America.

In order to link African American Muslims with other orthodox Muslims, Imam Mohammed changed the name of the Nation of Islam into Bilalian, and from Bilalian to the World Community of al-Islam, to the American Muslim Mission in the West, and, finally, to the American Muslim Society. These name changes reflect the stages of development that African American Muslims went through in America. It is to the credit of Imam Mohammed that he rejected the Black supremacy concept, as he strongly believed that Islam is beyond color and racism. At the same time, he acknowledged that African American Muslims have their own uniqueness and identity, which cannot be substituted with anything else. As he changed the name of

422 Rashad, *ibid.*, pp. 226-7, quoting *Muslim Journal*, October 14, 1994.

his community to reflect an international and inclusive identity, he changed also the name of the weekly journal of the NOI. Malcolm X had initially launched this journal and named it "*Muhammad Speaks*." Then it was called "*The American Muslim Journal*," and today it is known as "*Muslim Journal*."

In the past, the Nation of Islam was hierarchically structured with its centralized headquarters in Chicago. When Imam Mohammed assumed leadership of the NOI in 1975, he gradually decentralized this power and empowered local imams to be in charge of their local communities. Those imams found it very difficult to be independent in the beginning because they were used to receiving orders from Chicago. However, Imam Mohammed insisted that they be responsible for maintaining the affairs of their communities and be held accountable to them rather than to himself. Despite some insignificant abuses of power by some local imams, the decentralization was a great success and proved the visionary leadership of Imam Mohammed. Further, members of the Nation of Islam in the past had been required to dress in certain costume, but Imam Mohammed relaxed the strict dress code and emphasized cleanliness and purity of the body and soul. He encouraged women to be active participants in their mosques. The secondary roles assigned to them during the lifetime of Elijah Muhammad were modified and improved upon.

On Muslim Businesses in America

Imam Mohammed inherited a huge business and several companies associated with the NOI from his father. He bravely closed down those companies that were not profitable, reorganized others and leased still others to non-Muslims to manage them.⁴²³ He paid off the organization's long-term debt and back taxes, and sold most of its businesses.⁴²⁴ By so doing, he freed the NOI from the burden of managing some difficult businesses, lawsuits, and from corruption, with which it had been charged. He separated the running of business from the running of mosques.

423 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 91.

424 Turner, p. 226.

Once he was confirmed in the authority of leadership, Wallace, thenceforth called Warithu Deen, lost no time in setting to the reformation of the Nation. Authority was decentralized, the businesses were sold off or leased to private entrepreneurs, Farad was declared to have been mortal, and the memory of Elijah Muhammad, though still accorded honor, was reconsidered in the perspective of his times and his limitations. All racial considerations ranging from theological dogma to requirements for membership were discarded. The 'blue-eyed-devils' so indispensable to the rhetoric of Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X were rehabilitated and recognized on their merits as individuals rather than as intrinsically evil sons and daughters of Yacub.⁴²⁵

However, in the early 1990s, Imam Mohammed reemphasized the importance of business to the success of any Islamic propagation in the U.S. He encouraged his members to engage in some form of business, production, and trading, particularly with African countries. He was successful to a large extent, for many listened to his advice and did engage in business enterprises.

His Relationship with other Muslims and non-Muslim groups

Another significant step that Imam Mohammed took was to move the NOI from being a racist and separatist movement to orthodox Islam. He gradually allied himself with mainstream Islam by encouraging his members to truly practice Islam as espoused in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad. He asked his members to observe the five daily prayers and to fast in the month of Ramadan rather than in December. He also encouraged them to perform pilgrimage, which is one of the pillars of Islam. When immigrant Muslims recognized his commitment and saw his relentless efforts, they embraced him, although with some reservations. He in turn embraced them, for that was the recognition he was anticipating. Gradually, many of those who

425 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, pp. 264-5.

left NOI came back to practicing Islam; they felt proud of their new spiritual development.

Imam Mohammed traveled to many Arab countries, met with Muslim leaders and heads of states. Muslims all over the world expressed their admiration for his good actions and leadership. Despite all the praise he received, he never lost focus on attending to the needs of African American Muslims. He believed that Islam in America has its own uniqueness and deserves special attention, genuine understanding and new approaches, which can only be offered by Muslim American leaders. Therefore, some of his approaches to solving African American problems were not wholeheartedly endorsed by immigrant Muslim leaders or even by Muslim orthodox leaders in America. Yet Imam Mohammed claimed that he knew the needs of African American Muslims better than any other Muslim groups or association in the U.S. While he appreciated the support he received from fellow Muslims from other countries, he wanted to be left alone and not taught or told what to do. He felt very strongly that the situation in America was totally different from that in other Muslim countries. Hence, he asserted that what is applicable in other countries is often inapplicable in U.S. contexts.

I have great affection for the school of thought of Saudi Arabia. I don't belong to any particular school of thought and I don't advise any of my colleagues to begin to promote any school of thought in America. We will eventually have a school of thought in America, that's my hope, that's my belief. ... As long as our thought represents the essentials in the *Qur'an* and life of the Prophet, Islam has had different schools of thought. What's wrong with different schools of thought? We are encouraged to have our own opinion. Islam is not a static religion. I don't think we stopped growing.⁴²⁶

So far, his methods and approaches had been very successful. His followers ambitiously joined local and national politics, and made

great impact. Some of them have become mayors, councilmen, and civil servants in different state and national governmental levels.

Not only did Imam Mohammed strengthen his relationship with Muslims, but he extended his hand to non-Muslims as well and developed very strong relationships with them, particularly with Christian and Jewish leaders in the U.S. and abroad. His cordial relationships with adherents of other religions won him their appreciation and respect for Islam. It also helped defuse many prejudices against Islam and Muslims. Imam Mohammed attended numerous interfaith dialogues and participated in hundreds of conferences both nationally and internationally. He headed several national and international religious organizations and was appointed an executive member of other religious organizations. In 1995, he was elected the international president for the World Conference on Religion and Peace, which was established to promote peace and cooperation among all human beings. He received a religious award from the President of Egypt, "the Gold Medal of Recognition," in 1992. He was also the first Muslim religious leader invited to offer a prayer in the U.S. senate in 1992. He also participated in President Bill Clinton's inaugural celebration.⁴²⁷ In 1980, Imam Mohammed was the only American observer invited to the Tenth Annual Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (of the Muslim countries) held in Fez, Morocco. In 1998, he participated as a Muslim representative at the World Parliament of Religious Leaders Meeting for "Survival of the Earth and Its Environment," in Oxford, England. In 1998, also, he participated in the symbolic signing of the First Amendment Charter for Religious Freedom in Williamsburg, Virginia as representative of Muslims of America. In December 1994, Imam Mohammed was awarded the "Cup of Compassion Award" by Hartford Seminary for his work in improving Muslim, Christian, and Jewish relations.⁴²⁸ And, as C. Eric Lincoln put it, "The wheel has turned. The Nation of Islam had almost come full circle."⁴²⁹

The African American Muslim movement, which had been under CIA and FBI observation for more than fifty years, had become a movement whose present leader was invited to the White House

427 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 93.

428 Larry A. Poston, *The Changing Face of Islam in America* (Camp Hill, Penn.: Horizon Books, 2000), pp. 140-142.

429 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, p. 265.

426 Turner, p. 227, quoting "A Conversation with Warithu Deen," in an interview with Warithu Deen at Duke University.

to address its members and pray. What great recognition! Elijah Muhammad himself would never have dreamed that some of his members would be invited to and respected by the highest institution in the U.S., the institution he once called "a devil institution" whose members he labeled "evil creatures." He was wrong.

Imam Mohammed embraced America as his country; his movement displayed the American flag and students at Sister Clara Muhammad schools recite the U.S. national anthem along with the morning prayer. He claimed to be a strong believer in the American constitution.⁴³⁰

Some might feel that he could do more for Islam if he adopted a more powerful style. But the activities and achievements noted above demonstrate that his quieter approach has earned him credibility within the global Islamic community that Farrakhan and others like him will never attain. For this reason, we evangelical Christians must consider Warithu Deen Mohammed a more formidable competitor for the souls of men and women than Louis Farrakhan. The quiet influence of Elijah Muhammad's heir upon his 1.5 million followers will likely be of more lasting significance than the emotional frenzy produced by the current leader of the Nation of Islam.⁴³¹

The above witness from Christian evangelical scholar Larry Poston affirms the effectiveness of Imam Mohammed's approach to Islam in America. However, critics charged Imam Mohammed with destroying the economic infrastructure built by his father, which was a huge source of pride for many African Americans, who saw themselves economically independent under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad. Imam Mohammed is also accused of assailing his father and Wallace Fard publicly, an approach that many older members of the Nation of Islam abhorred. His critique of his father's pronouncements was perceived as harsh and unwarranted.

Minister Farrakhan believes that Warithu Deen Mohammed has misinterpreted his father's teachings.

430 Poston, p. 135.

431 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

In his view, when Elijah Muhammad stated that white people were devils, he meant it in a literal sense. Furthermore, Farrakhan agrees with Elijah Muhammad's unique interpretation of the Bible and the *Qur'an* as the most appropriate scriptural messages for the liberation of the Black masses. He considers orthodox Islam inappropriate for African Americans because it does not take into account their condition in the United States or discrimination against them in the Islamic world.⁴³²

Perhaps Imam Mohammed was aware of all this. It is absolutely wrong, however, to assume that Imam Mohammed was the puppet of any Arab leader or authority. He knew Arab leaders very well and let them know his stand on many issues concerning Islam and Muslims in America.

It is pertinent to mention that some Sunni Muslims charged that Imam Mohammed did not criticize his father enough. They wonder why he continuously referred to him with respect despite the fact that he (Elijah) claimed to be a prophet. They wanted him to condemn his father because of this claim. Whenever Imam Mohammed mentioned his father's name and asked God to forgive him, some audiences wondered why he should be forgiven. But this is an extreme view among Muslims in America. Imam Mohammed and a few others argue that Elijah Muhammad should be credited for bringing Islam to the American public and fighting for it until it was recognized as a legitimate religion on an equal level with Christianity, and for emancipating African Americans from the slave mentality. Many African Americans, particularly non-Muslims, believe that Imam Mohammed dropped notions of economic freedom and social justice for all Blacks. Rather, he is suspected of concentrating on those Black Muslims who followed him. In reality, only a few African non Muslim Americans listened to his lectures; they paid less attention to his ministry.

Unfortunately, too, his followers, especially the local imams, his representatives in the community, do not today promote his ideas enough to win many converts. This author attended several lectures delivered by Imam Mohammed in different cities. Instead of selling the tapes of his lectures, the local imams are selling their own tapes of their

432 Turner, pp. 227-8.

Friday sermons. They fail to heed many of his instructions regarding how to be more effective and functional in their communities. Yet, when they see him, they behave like the *murid* (Sufi followers). Nonetheless, despite all this criticism, the future of Islam in America would be better served by Imam Mohammed's community than by Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, as pointed out by Turner.

The future bodes well for Warithu Deen Mohammed's Muslim American Community since it has identified with the multi-racial orthodox Islamic world and has the late Elijah Muhammad's vast resources at its disposal. International Islamic leaders see Warithu's organization as an opportunity to establish a permanent Islamic outpost in the United States. They have named him *Mujadidu-d-din* –reviver of religion – and have given him the authority to certify all pilgrimages to Mecca from North America. Furthermore, Wallace's multi-racialism has made his movement more attractive to potential white converts in the United States. The Muslim American Community's schools are noteworthy—they offer courses in Arabic from the elementary grades through high school. It is likely that future American scholars in Islamic studies will emerge from this group. On the other hand, the resurrected Nation of Islam relies on Louis Farrakhan's personal charisma and the appeal of Black Nationalism for its continued growth.⁴³³

Minister Louis Farrakhan: A Devout Follower of Honorable Elijah Muhammad

Those who did not know Elijah Muhammad can see his replica in Minister Louis Farrakhan, a devout follower of Elijah Muhammad, or "a prophet of rage" (as White Americans call him). Louis Farrakhan, a true follower of Elijah Muhammad, was born in 1933, the same year that Imam Warithu Deen Mohammed was born. Louis Farrakhan attended high school and junior college and became a singer. He

433 Turner, p. 229.

was introduced to the Nation of Islam through Malcolm X, whom he loved and imitated. He was well trained by Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad himself. He held many different positions in the NOI. When Malcolm was assassinated in 1965, Louis Farrakhan took over the Boston Temple and later was appointed minister of the New York Temple. He did his job well and became close to Elijah, whom he considered his spiritual father and great mentor.

Gradually, after the death of Malcolm X, Elijah appointed him as his spokesman. He was deeply loyal to Elijah Muhammad and the NOI. When Imam Warithu Deen Mohammed became the head of the Nation, Farrakhan accepted him reluctantly. He followed him for some time, but disagreed with him on several issues, among which was Imam Mohammed's denial of Wallace Fard's claim to be God and Elijah Muhammad's claim to be Prophet. Thus, in 1978, after three years of being patient with Imam Mohammed, Farrakhan announced his independence and re-invented the Nation of Islam again. He said:

When I could not agree with him any longer, I separated myself from him. Not to take up stones to throw them at him but because I honestly could not abide his criticism of his father, who had laid the basis for our development Islamically in America.⁴³⁴

Many people anticipated a clash between the followers of these two groups, but fortunately, the parting was peaceful and both groups exercised much self-discipline and control. They have never fought one another publicly.⁴³⁵

Those people who disliked Imam Mohammed's changes and the way he restructured the Nation of Islam joined Farrakhan, including Elijah's son, Muhammad. Within a short time, Farrakhan was able to gather around him a great number of people from all fields of life from among the African American population. He was also aggressive in recruiting new members, many of whom were young Black males from the streets.

Farrakhan first dropped the Islamic name, Abdul Haleem, given to him by Elijah Muhammad and retained his Christian name, Louis.

434 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 93 quoting Barboza in *American Jihad*, p. 143.

435 Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, p. 268.

He dropped his title as imam. He preferred to be called Minister Louis Farrakhan. Abdul Haleem means a servant of the Patient, which is one of the attributes of God in Islam. Farrakhan came to believe that patience with the America government would not solve any of the problems faced by Blacks in America. He believed that Americans should be told in plain language what African Americans feel about White people and their institutions, and how they had been unjustly treated and exploited in America. After the separation from Imam Mohammed, Farrakhan retained all the ideologies and policies of Elijah Muhammad, including the rhetoric of Black Supremacy and the old story about Yacub. He repeatedly affirmed that Wallace Fard was God incarnated. He rewrote the Nation of Islam's articles of faith and printed them on the cover of his weekly news, *The Final Call*, which the NOI began to publish in 1984. The articles are:

1. We believe in the One God whose proper name is *Allah*.
2. We believe in the Holy *Qur'an* and in the Scriptures of all the Prophets of God.
3. We believe in the truth of the Bible, but we believe that it has been tampered with and must be reinterpreted so that mankind will not be snared by the falsehoods that have been added to it.
4. We believe in *Allah's* Prophets and the Scriptures they brought to the people.
5. We believe in the resurrection of the dead – not in physical resurrection – but in mental resurrection.
6. We believe in the judgment; we believe this first judgment will take place as God revealed, in America.
7. We believe this is the time in history for the separation of the so-called Negroes and the so-called white Americans. ...
8. We believe in justice for all. ...
9. We believe that the offer of integration is hypocritical. ...
10. We believe that we, who declare ourselves to be righteous Muslims, should not participate in wars, which take the lives of humans. ...

11. We believe our women should be respected and protected as the women of other nationalities are respected and protected.
12. We believe that *Allah* (God) appeared in the person of Master W. Fard Muhammad, July, 1930; the long-awaited "Messiah" of the Christians and the "Mahdi" of the Muslims. We believe further and lastly that *Allah* is God and besides Him there is no God and he will bring about a universal government of peace wherein we all can live in peace together.⁴³⁶

These articles are not in accord with the articles of faith in orthodox Islam. Members of the Nation continued to fast in December instead of fasting with Muslims in the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of Muslim calendar. But in 1995, Minister Louis Farrakhan instructed his followers to fast during Ramadan with other Muslims.

Some areas of tension between Farrakhan and Imam W. D. Mohammed included their ways of looking at Black issues and the methods they preferred of solving them. While Imam Mohammed preached integration with the White community because we are all human beings, Farrakhan insists on segregation as advocated by Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X in his early days. However, there was a change in Farrakhan's policies; he finally allowed his members to join politics and run for political office. Some of his members won some seats in Washington D. C in the 1990s.⁴³⁷

Rashad points out four factors that led to the separation between Imam Warithu Deen Mohammed and Minister Louis Farrakhan. They are: Imam Mohammed's public rejection of his father's teachings, his rejection of Black Nationalist sentiment, his total neutralization of the social and economic infrastructure of the Nation of Islam, which was built by his father, and his accommodative approach to the American political system.⁴³⁸ Rashad argues that many African American Muslims did not appreciate Imam Mohammed's approach of leniency and deviation from the path mapped out by Elijah Muhammad.

However, after studying the history of this movement and the policies of Imam Mohammed, it can be said without doubt that he was not trying to assassinate his father's character by pointing out

436 McCloud, *African American Islam*, pp. 80-81.

437 Turner, p. 230.

438 Rashad, p. 239.

his mistakes. He affirmed on several occasions that his father knew Wallace Fard was not God and that he honestly believed in *Allah* and in Islam, even though he preached wrong ideology, particularly to the public. Also, Imam Mohammed was convinced that advocating Black Supremacy is in itself a sort of discrimination. Thus, Imam Mohammed wondered why White people should be blamed for racism when Black people act the same way. All human beings are creatures of God and should all be respected. He emphatically affirmed that the religion of Islam is for all humanity and that it condemns racism in all forms. As mentioned above, despite the rhetoric of Minister Louis Farrakhan, his organization has begun integrating and working with the government of the U.S. and with White people on several levels. With regard to the destruction of the economic empire built by Elijah Muhammad, Imam Mohammed retained those companies, which are still profitable today and got rid of the non-profitable ones. He sold off others to pay the debt and legal fees incurred by the Nation of Islam. In our view, Imam Mohammed's approach was visionary.

Some critics accuse Minister Louis Farrakhan of making sweeping statements and being overly confrontational with other people, the media, and Jews, as in the case with a journalist in Washington D. C. But at other times, his speeches receive warm welcome from Blacks because he addresses issues relevant to their daily suffering in a White society. Many Blacks are thrilled whenever Minister Louis Farrakhan gives a speech. They believe that he can say whatever he wants as it is. They call him the "plain-truth" minister. The previously unheard Blacks and underprivileged consider Louis Farrakhan their spokesman. And for whatever reason, his appeals are heeded by his disciples and by his opponents, who are forced to re-think and re-evaluate most of the issues he raises, which mostly concern poor Americans in a land of abundance.

Despite this critique and the negative portrayal of Louis Farrakhan in the media, Lincoln points out that Farrakhan should be credited for many of his achievements and positive initiatives. Lincoln mentions a few areas in which Farrakhan made great contributions. First, after purchasing the headquarters of the old Nation of Islam from Imam Mohammed, Farrakhan restructured it and called it Maryam's mosque in remembrance of Maryam (Mary), Jesus' mother. Second, he

appointed Sister Ava Muhammad, a New York attorney, a minister in the Nation of Islam. This appointment was the first time in the history of African American Muslims in America that a woman was appointed to the position of high leadership, a position that had always been strictly reserved for men.⁴³⁹ Sister Ava Muhammad serves as a spiritual leader for women and promotes youth programs. Also, Louis Farrakhan registered to vote and encouraged his members to do the same. Under his leadership, too, the Fruit of Islam, which he restructured, provided security for Jesse Jackson, a democratic vice-president candidate in 1980s during his campaign. In addition, the Fruit of Islam gained recognition for keeping Black neighborhoods free of drugs and drug addicts.

In the late 1980s, the Black residents of Mayfair Mansion, a housing project in Washington, D. C. that had been taken over by drug dealers called in the Nation of Islam to patrol their neighborhood. With the cooperation of the police department, the Muslims eliminated the drug traffic and crime in the development in a short time and have maintained Mayfair Mansion as a crime-free area for two years. This story exemplifies the Nation of Islam's success in fighting crime in poor Black communities throughout the United States.⁴⁴⁰

In conclusion, both Imam Mohammed and Minister Louis Farrakhan were born in the same year and trained under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad and the mentorship of Malcolm X. While Imam Mohammed is the biological son of Elijah Muhammad, Minister Louis Farrakhan also considers himself a member of Elijah's family through intermarriage. Both men tried their best to promote Islam in America, as they understood it. Imam Mohammed with his quiet approach appealed to millions of African Americans as he led them spiritually without violence and with diligence to the straight path of Islam. Minister Louis Farrakhan, on the other hand, with his aggressive approach, is able to draw the attention of millions of Blacks to Islam. He

439 Lincoln, p. 271.

440 Turner, p. 231, quoting Farrakhan Interview, "Cliff Kelley Show," WGCI Radio Station, Chicago, Ill, 1990.

enables them to recognize their fate in American society. Oftentimes, many Blacks first become members of the Nation of Islam before they revert to mainstream Islam. Thus, membership in the Nation of Islam is truly a passage toward orthodox Islam. Such a passage has great value. Both men should be praised for raising awareness about Islam in America, for their patience and self-discipline, and the respect they accorded to one another despite their different opinions on many issues. The public expected a clash between the two, with violence and public unrest among their members, but this never happened. Imam Mohammad died in September 2008. But when he was still alive, the two met occasionally and expressed sympathy and mutual understanding and the desire to work together for the betterment of African Americans, regardless of their faith.

Other African American Muslim Groups in America

Even though the followers of the Nation of Islam and Imam Warithu Deen Mohammed still dominate the Islamic scene in America, they are not the only Islamic movements among Blacks. There are several other Muslim groups. Some of these movements emerged separately, while others sprang from the Nation of Islam. What they all have in common is their claim to Islam and their search for recognition. Many of them realize how far they are from true Islam, but believe nobody will listen to them unless they cover themselves up with Islamic robes, ideology, and affinity with Islam or allegiance to prominent Islamic scholars or leaders. Oftentimes, Islamists in America label these groups as sectarian, but they never perceive of themselves as sectarian. In general, each movement has contributed to Islam in America. How each group defines itself makes it unique. Yet no one group has become the subject of persecution by another in the U.S., despite the fact that occasionally some groups or movements label members of other groups as infidels. A complete discussion of all the African American Islamic movements is beyond the scope of this book, though reference will be made to a few of them, among which are the Ahmadiyyah movement, about which many Americans have very little knowledge, and the Ansarullah movement.

The Ahmadiyyah Movement

The Ahmadiyyah movement was named after its founder, Ahmad Ghulam of India. He was born in Qadian in 1839 and received both traditional Islamic and Western educations. As he grew up, he found he did not like traditional Islamic ways of life and accused Muslim Indians of lacking a proper understanding of Islam. However, in 1889, he claimed to have received a divine revelation from God and declared himself the awaited Messiah (*Mahdi*) in 1891. As he advanced, he called himself a prophet and claimed to have received messages from God (*wahy*). He called these revelations *Baraheen Ahmadiyyah* – the proofs of Ahmadiyyah. All his writings, revelations, and pronouncements were later compiled in a collection entitled *Roohan Khazain*, which includes 80 books published by the Ahmadiyyah movement in London.

Ahmad Ghulam professed to be everything to everybody, an avatar of Krishna to Hindus, the manifestation of Muhammad to Muslims, and a messiah (*masih*) to Christians. When he was condemned by the Muslim scholars of India and charged of claiming false prophethood, he made adjustments to his claims in his later writings, those he wrote before he died. Some of the areas of contention were:

- a) His claim of prophethood and his denial that Muhammad bin Abdullah as the last prophet,
- b) His denial and abrogation of *Jihad* in Islam,
- c) His denial of some meanings of some *Qur'an* verses regarding Jesus' death, resurrection, *Hijab* in Islam, and pilgrimage to Mecca. He does not consider the *Qur'an* "the authority,"
- d) His claim to have received specific revelation from God, which are superior to the message of the *Qur'an*, and
- e) His denial of some authentic sayings of the Prophet Muhammad about Prophet Jesus, *Dajjal*, and other signs of the end of life.

Disciples of Ahmad Ghulam denied all these charges and argued that their leader did not claim to be a prophet⁴⁴¹. However, by referring to

441 In the website of the Ahmadiyyah movement, the branch of the Lahore movement cites twenty reasons and evidences why the members of Ahmadiyyah believe that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib did not claim to be a Prophet (www.Ahmadiyya.com). Most of these reasons are abstracts from the works of

the very writings of Ahmad Ghulam, there is enough evidence that he claimed most of what he was accused of claiming in his early writings. Nonetheless, after his death, his followers divided into two groups due to a leadership struggle. Both groups are extant today. Ahmad Ghulam died in 1908 and his followers became missionaries spreading his message and teachings all over the world, particularly in Europe, Africa and North America.

The Ahmadiyyah movement arrived in the United States in 1920. Its missionaries were well-trained, having both Islamic and Western educations. Thus, as early as the 1920s, they began to win new members through the efforts of Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, a missionary to the U.S. They opened centers around California, Chicago, and in many other cities. They worked hard with African Americans and did win some of them to their movement. A few Caucasians joined them as well. It is said that though the Ahmadiyyah movement had very good relations with African Americans, they could not win many of them, because the movement in the 1920s–1940s failed to address their specific needs.

The Ahmadiyyah movement followed and continues to follow in the footsteps and approaches of Western missionaries in their propagation of Islam. As early as 1920, it opened its centers in East and West Africa and established many elementary and high schools. Islamic studies and Western education coupled with modern sciences are offered in those schools. The movement often attracts followers due to its organizational structure and the efforts of its trained missionaries. Ahmadis are very active on campuses; they engage in spreading the message of Islam as espoused by their leader. Without doubt, this movement should be given credit for its unique efforts in translating the Holy *Qur'an* into many world languages, particularly African languages. Sunni Muslims warn that Muslims should be careful when reading translations of the *Qur'an* by the Ahmadiyyah movement because they may contain inaccurate translations. Of course, some Sunni institutions translate the Holy *Qur'an* into other languages through the financial support of the Muslim World league in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, but their efforts cannot be compared to the efforts of the Ahmadiyyah movement, which not only translates the Holy *Qur'an* but also translates many other pieces

Ahmad Ghulam himself, particularly *Izalat al-Awham* (removing the doubt), and *Majma' a ishtiharat*, vol. 2.

of Islamic literature and disseminates them to remote areas in Africa, just as Christian missionaries do. This movement is also noted for its social and community services in the U.S. It has branches in 38 cities, 8 mosques, and several mission houses in the country. Its programs provide financial support to the poor in the U.S. and abroad and its services are not limited to Muslims.

It is pertinent to mention here that many non-Pakistani and non-Indian members of the Ahmadiyyah movement know little about the origin and actual beliefs of this movement. Members are kept in the dark about much of the controversy surrounding Ahmad Ghulam. Oftentimes, when members learn the basic beliefs of Ahmadiyyah, they are astonished. Some then leave and join mainstream Islam. For instance, this author was once a member of the movement in Nigeria in the 1960s, but knew nothing about the movement's ideological and theological issues until he traveled abroad for a higher education. Many prominent Nigerian scholars and professors in the 1960s and 1970s were members of the Ahmadiyyah movement. A few even held prominent positions in the movement and became local missionaries. Yet, they were not fully informed until the Pakistani government declared the Ahmadiyyah movement a heretical sect in 1974. With the collaboration of the Saudi Arabian government, members of the Ahmadiyyah movement were prevented from performing pilgrimage to Mecca unless they turned to Sunni (orthodox) Muslim. It was at that time that the general Muslim public around the world began to ask questions about the origin of this movement.⁴⁴²

Ismail Balogun, professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, denounced his membership in the Ahmadiyyah movement and wrote extensively about his reasons for abandoning it and reverting back to Sunni Islam. He rejected his membership in the movement in which he had spent his youth and focused his scholarship. His evidence was so compelling that the Ahmadis themselves could not refute it. Since 1970, the Ahmadiyyah movement has spent a great deal of energy defending its theories and theology, and its founder as well. The movement would have been one of the largest Muslim evangelical movements in the world if not for its founder's claim of prophethood and his collaboration with the British government against the Muslims 442 For more information, see Ismail Balogun's work, *Islam Versus Ahmadiyyah in Nigeria*. (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh Muhammad Ashraf, 1974.

of India. Ghulam Ahmad praised the British government for the support they gave to his father to regain his status in India, despite the fact that it was the British government that put an end to Muslim rule in India.

Today, members of the movement are predominantly Pakistani and Indian. Even though they relate to other Muslims, they rarely socialize with them. They consider them to be uncommitted to Islam. The Ahmadis prefer dealing and socializing with non-Muslims to win them to Islam. Of course, they are noted for their aggressive evangelical bent and their high level of education. However, it is unfair to say they are persecuted by other Muslim groups in Pakistan out of jealousy.⁴⁴³ The condemnation of the Ahmadis by the whole Muslim world stems directly from their belief in Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet or the Madhi, the awaited messiah and some of their misinterpretations of verses in the *Qur'an*.

Ansarullah Group: The Muslim Community for Christ

One of the influential African American Muslim movements in America in the 1970s and 1980s was the Ansarullah group. Isa Muhammad founded it in 1970. He claims different origins for his birth and his identity remains obscure. Having no solid traditional knowledge of Islam, he constantly changes his name, identity, and philosophy to meet his needs. He began by calling himself a son of the Mahdi of Sudan, then a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through Fatimah, Muhammad's daughter, and he finally as Robboni Y'shua, the Lord Jesus. Many Muslims see him as deeply confused.⁴⁴⁴

Imam Isa Muhammad started his movement as an orthodox Islamic group, as opposed to the Nation of Islam or the Moorish Science Temple of Noble Drew Ali, which began as racist movements. In the beginning, many African Americans rallied around him because he taught his followers the basic teachings of Islam, the Arabic language, and *Hadith*. He gave his members a new orientation. Imam Isa Muhammad traveled extensively in the Arab world, and stayed longest in Egypt and Sudan. From his self-taught study of the Nubians and his observations in Sudan, he concludes that the Black people are superior

443 Turner, p. 231.

444 Haddad and Smith, *Mission to America*, p. 136.

beings and that many of the relatives and disciples of the Prophet Muhammad of Mecca were Black. He claims that Abu Talib and Ali were Black. To him, several prophets mentioned in the *Qur'an* were also Black. Imam Isa tries to give a new identity to the Black people of America. However, while Noble Drew Ali was convinced that Africans originated from Morocco and Wallace Fard insisted that the Blacks were of Asian origin, Imam Isa Muhammad teaches that the Blacks originated from the Nubian tribes in Sudan and Egypt.

While (Noble Drew) Ali saw the link with Morocco, Isa (Muhammad) sees it in the Sudan. The quest is for a national origin that not only provides the African American community with an ethnic heritage and a noble lineage, but also implies a complete rejection of American identification of African Americans by color as 'Negroes.' Nubian lineage serves as denial of 'Negro-ness' for Isa in the way Asiatic heritage did for Noble Drew Ali.⁴⁴⁵

Imam Isa claims to be a reformer, a renewer of all religions, a messiah, a true interpreter of the message of God, the chosen person to proclaim the truth of which he alone possesses to the exclusion of others. He sees himself as a translator of the true meaning of the *Qur'an*.⁴⁴⁶ In order to prove the authenticity of his message, he condemns all previous African American Muslim leaders - Wallace Fard, Elijah Muhammad, Noble Drew Ali, Malcolm X, Warithu Deen and Louis Farrakhan. He labels them as imperfect and denounces them for not being good reformers.⁴⁴⁷ He also rejects other Sunni schools of law except the Maliki School of Law, which he seems to know very little about. All the other schools of Islamic law are confused, he alleges. In addition, he openly condemns other Islamic and Muslim movements and organizations in the U.S. He sees them as deceivers and manipulators. In a nutshell, he believes that his own understanding is the only right comprehension of Islam.⁴⁴⁸ America is fertile soil for new ideologies. And since many African Americans are searching for a new identity, they find in Isa

445 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

446 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

447 *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9.

448 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Muhammad a role model who charges the pale man (the White) of all evil that happened to the Blacks in the world. Isa Muhammad emerges as a Muslim, then a Mahdi, then a messiah, and now a Rabbi, who dislikes the use of the word *Allah* in his writings. He presently refers to himself as a Rabboni Y'shua (the Lord Christ).⁴⁴⁹

Although Isa Muhammad has written extensively about Islam, racism, and other subjects, he has not been noticed publicly because the media pays him little attention due to his non-violent attitude. The American government does not perceive him a threat. In fact, many immigrant Muslims have little knowledge about Imam Isa and his movement. Members of Ansarullah pride themselves on being superior to White people. They claim to be the chosen people of God, and say that the Arabic language is their original language.⁴⁵⁰ It is ironic how Arabic can be their original language when the Nubians did not speak Arabic. Sudan's people became Arabized after the spread of Islam there. They have their own language and some of them are not Muslims.

Other Muslim organizations in the U.S.A have been critical of the Ansarullah movement for the way it has isolated itself from other Muslim groups. The pretext is that it does not want to be corrupted by White people. If the Ansarullah movement claims to be a Muslim organization and, in fact, the "best" Islamic movement in America, as propounded by its founder, its failure to interact, communicate, and work with other Muslim groups misconstrues a basic tenet of Islam, which emphasizes unity and cooperation among its followers. Imam Isa is also suspected of asking for too many donations from his members and using whatever he receives for himself rather than for the community's needs.⁴⁵¹ At times he has asked his members to beg in the streets to generate money. Despite the fact that Islam condemns begging, he justifies this request by referring to his visit to Egypt in 1981, where he saw some Muslims begging at the doors of the mosque.

Imam Isa also endorses the practice of polygamous marriage for his members, even though American law condemns it.⁴⁵² He defends himself against some of these charges and accepts others. He has stated that he does not perceive anything wrong with begging and

polygamous marriage despite the fact that some of his members who marry more than one wife rely on public assistance and begging to feed their families. Eventually, he retired and withdrew officially from the Ansarullah movement, but continues to supervise and guide its progress. The future of Ansarullah movement depends on what will happen after his death.

The Darul-Islam Movement: The Abode of Islam

Another African American Muslim movement is Darul Islam. Ishaq Abduga Shaheed, Rajab Mahmud and Yahya Abdul Kareem founded this group in 1962 in New York. Their main objective was to establish "an organic, functioning Islamic community."⁴⁵³ These founders were not satisfied with the trend of Islam in America as directed by the Nation of Islam and as led by immigrant Muslims. They felt that immigrant leaders were insensitive to the interests and needs of African American Muslims. Thus, Darul-Islam's leaders focus on establishing a strong organization geared toward meeting the spiritual, social, economic, and physical needs of African American Muslims. Even though membership in Darul-Islam is open, interested persons must be guided to become a member through a learning process by studying a textbook called "*Fundamentals of Islam*," and passing a test on its contents. Their objective is to prepare all potential members mentally to become truly committed to the movement. Members receive instruction on *Qur'anic* studies, *Hadith*, and the general basic tenets of Islam.⁴⁵⁴ Female members receive instruction on cooking, sewing, and home economics, while brothers additionally receive physical training, martial arts and horseback riding.⁴⁵⁵ And since the movement began in protest against Muslim immigrants, immigrants cannot become members of Darul-Islam. This movement has a governing board (*shura*), which is its decision making body. However, it has experienced internal conflict from its inception and thus often disbands and then reassembles.⁴⁵⁶

449 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

450 Turner, p. 234.

451 Haddad and Smith, p. 127.

452 *Ibid.*, pp. 128-9.

453 Nyang, p.148, quoting *al-Jihadul Akbar*, vol. I, no. 1, p. 1.

454 McCloud, p. 70.

455 *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

456 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 97.

Darul-Islam maintains several mosques in major cities in the U.S. It is reported to be one of the largest Sunni Muslim communities in America. As it grows, it has moved away from its separatist ideas. Not all its members welcome the inclusive approach of Darul-Islam, though. Unfortunately, many African American Muslims are still hostile to immigrant Muslim leadership. They charge immigrants with lenience and assimilation to American ways of life. This charge led to a new division among Darul-Islam's members in the 1980s. And when it was about to collapse after the departure of its spiritual leader, Imam Yahya Abdul Kareem, a devout member from Atlanta who was a great supporter of Darul-Islam, Imam Jamil al-Amin, took over. He was formally known as H. Rap Brown. He has restructured the movement, given it strong leadership, and allies it with other Muslim organizations in the U.S. The movement progressed rapidly until its leader was jailed in 2000. He is suspected of killing a police officer in Atlanta. Under Imam Al-Amin's leadership, the movement also established many branches in various parts of America and in the Caribbean.⁴⁵⁷ In terms of practicing Islam, Darul-Islam appears to be orthodox and conservative. As pointed out by McCloud, gender separation is strictly observed, women are discouraged from work, while polygamous marriage is practiced.⁴⁵⁸ Even though, Darul-Islam claims to be orthodox in its conception, most feel it must develop beyond the racism and localism that some of its members espouse.

From the above analysis of Islamic movements among African Americans, we can establish certain facts that characterize them. First, Islam has been in America since the discovery of the New World. Hence, the Arabs did not introduce Islam to Americans in the 19th century as previously thought. Second, Islam has never disappeared completely from the lives of African American Muslims.⁴⁵⁹ Third, African American Muslims represent more than 50% of the Muslim population in the U.S. Fourth, if other Muslim organizations are free to speak for themselves and express their religious beliefs as they want, African American Muslims assert that they too should be free to express their religious experiences. It is through these experiences that

they learn, adjust, and articulate their beliefs, and then shape their lives according to their understanding of Islam.

Certainly, African Americans can learn from other Muslims from other parts of the world, but posit they should be free to internalize and interpret Islam to fit their cultural background, as did many Muslims in other countries: India, Africa, and Asia, for example. Their interpretations of Islam should not be considered wrong just because they are African Americans. Rather, their opinions should be evaluated according to the spirit of Islam particularly in areas that are not purely religious (*mu'amalat*). At the same time, African American Muslims should not assume that they possess a monopoly on the interpretation of Islam in America without a proper and adequate knowledge of traditional Islamic learning: the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, and the Arabic language, which are the fundamentals of Islamic knowledge. It is unfortunate to observe people who lecture on *Qur'anic* Arabic when they themselves cannot speak or read the language fluently, or even pronounce Arabic letters correctly, conjugate, or refer a word to its etymological root.

Finally, African American Muslims should be proud for bringing Islam to the American public. Their contributions to American society have been tremendous in all spheres of life and their influence is far greater than their number suggests. Their leaders are brave, articulate, and peace loving people who want freedom and equal justice for their followers and for all oppressed people. Their sacrifices, loyalty and dedication to the progress and freedom of their people have had no limit. They struggle and fight for their rights publicly. Unfortunately, this pride in being Muslims occasionally angers non-Muslim African Americans. They wonder why so many Blacks have chosen Islam as their religion. Yet, African American Muslims call non-Muslim African Americans their brothers and sisters and generally show them great respect.

Islam Among The Immigrant Muslims in America

Amazingly, Muslims who come to the U.S. from other countries are labeled as immigrants. The fact is that all people in America are originally or are descended from immigrants to the country except

457 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

458 McCloud, p. 71.

459 Nyang, pp. 56-8.

the Native Indians, who have their own terrible history of subjugation by Europeans. Calling Muslims from other countries "immigrants" is a form of racism and amounts to social discrimination in our view. When this term is used by African American Muslims, it refers to all "foreign" Muslims, even to those who have become American citizens and their children who are born and grow up in America. This label also carries with it a sort of stigmatization in that the immigrants are looked upon as "opportunists," people who come here to compete with "true" Americans for exclusive rights or properties (their piece of the American dream). When used socially, it refers to those Muslims who possess some wealth but do not know how to use it properly or do not understand the American ways of life. Thus, many African Americans perceive "the immigrants" as emotional and irrational people because they do not reason the way the African Americans think. But whatever name is given to these groups, they must be considered Muslims; they have come to America like anyone else in search of better life. They come from all parts of the Muslim world and many received their higher educations before their arrival in America. Many attend schools here in the U.S., earn their degrees or diplomas and work hard. They earn whatever they earn through their own hard labor and persistence though they have not received the full support that Americans get from their government as citizens.

Of course, even though African American Muslims have contributed greatly to establishing Islam and making it a public and recognized religion in the U.S., the continuous contributions and influences of immigrant Muslims can never be underrated or overlooked. The early immigrant Muslims from the Middle East were not as educated as those who came later, especially after World War II. In the 1960s and 70s, many students arrived from Iran, Asia, and Arab countries with the hope of receiving higher educations and returning home. However, a majority of them did not return; they stayed in the U.S. for political and economic reasons.⁴⁶⁰ Eventually, after living in the country for some time, they began to formulate how they could live an Islamic life in a country that is predominantly Christian. They formed Muslim and Islamic associations and organizations to attend to the needs of the Muslims in America and many of these have flourished.

460 Nyang, pp. 60-64.

The Muslim Student Association

One of the Islamic associations that continues to have tremendous impact on the lives of many Muslims in America is the Muslim Student Association (MSA). It was established in 1963 by a few students at the University of Illinois and gradually expanded to other campuses around the U.S. Gurbi Ahmad, former president of the MSA in North America, notes that the establishment of the MSA in 1963 is crucial in Islamic history in America. The year 1963 was the same year that Imam Khomeini of Iran was expelled from Iran; it was the year that the largest Muslim organization in Pakistan, the *Jama'at al-Islami*, was banned and its leader Maulana Abu Ala al-Mawdudi sentenced to death. That same year, members of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, were jailed and Sayyid Qutb, one of its outspoken leaders and theorists, was executed three years later. The point is that 1963 was a disastrous year for Muslims and their active leaders in Muslim countries. Yet, it was the dawn of Islamic revival and the birth of one of the greatest student movements in America.⁴⁶¹

The Muslim Student Association focuses on educating Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam. It concentrates its efforts on college campuses throughout the U.S. MSA represents the diversity and internationalism of Islam. It publishes several magazines and disseminates Islamic literature to students on campuses, Muslims at different mosques and to Muslim inmates at correctional institutions. At present, the MSA has branches at many universities in America and Canada. It has replaced many of the former Muslim organizations which were formed on the basis of ethnicity. MSA members represent Muslim countries all over the world.

The MSA was formed to strengthen national and international ties among Muslims of all national origins and ethnicities. Following the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and the *Jama'at Islami* of the Indian subcontinent, the group was created to provide a structure through which the Muslim student associations that had begun to appear on a number of

461 Gurbi Ahmad, "Muslim Organizations in the United States," in Y. Haddad, ed., *The Muslims of America* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 14-15.

American campuses could relate to one another. It soon developed into an agency with enormous influence in helping redefine Islamic identity in America as something beyond national, ethnic, and linguistic allegiances.⁴⁶²

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)

After some years of operation, many members of MSA graduated, stayed and worked in the U.S. As the needs of local Muslims grew rapidly, the MSA found it could not function only on campuses as students; thus, it formed an umbrella organization in 1980 called the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) to cater to the needs of Muslims both on campuses and in the community. ISNA then became an umbrella organization to many other Muslim associations and an overseeing body for a great number of emerging Islamic groups such as:

1. F.I.A. (Federation of Islamic Association)
2. A.M.M. (American Muslim Mission)
3. N.A.I.T. (North American Islamic Trust)
4. I.T.C. (Islamic Teaching Center)
5. A.M.S.E. (American Muslim Scientists and Engineers)
6. A.M.S.S. (American Muslim Social Scientists)
7. I.M.A. (Islamic Medical Association)
8. M.C.A. (Muslim Community Association)
9. F.I.D. (Foundation of International Development)
10. C.I.T. (Canadian Islamic Trust)
11. M.Y.N.A. (Muslim Youth of North America)
12. M.I.S.G. (Malaysian Islamic Study Group)
13. M.A.Y.A. (Muslim Arab Youth Association)
14. A.M.M. (American Muslim Mission)
15. ICNA. (Islamic Circle of North America). This group operates separately from ISNA.
16. A.M.M. (American Muslim Mission) and
17. M.A.S. (Muslim American Society). This is not Imam Warithu-Deen's group.⁴⁶³

Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) organizes annual conferences, seminars, training, and oversees many projects that aim at improving and enhancing Islamic values in the U.S. and solving the day-to-day problems of the Muslims there. It is headquartered in Plainfield, Indianapolis.

ISNA affords the intellectually curious members and Muslims in general an opportunity to hear and interact with eminent Muslim scholars and youth leaders from America and from the Muslim world. Its annual convention allows business people a forum to exhibit their goods, exchange business ideas and provide a time for social meetings and interactions among participants.⁴⁶⁴

In addition, ISNA provides these services to Muslim communities in America and Canada: a speaker's Bureau, film loan, schooling and educational workshops, a library assistance program, conference facilities, housing assistance, Muslim cooperative projects, marriage certification, counseling services, Islamic correspondence courses, information for prison bureaucracies, the ISNA Zakat fund, Islamic literature for Muslims and non-Muslims, American Trust Publications, Islamic Book Services, Amana Mutual Fund, Electronic Data Processing and many others. ISNA is open to all Muslims in the U.S. and Canada; it publishes its own journals, which include: *Islamic Horizon*, *Al-Itihad*, the *American Journal of Islamic Studies*⁴⁶⁵ and *Journal of Islamic Social Scientists*.

There are other Muslim and Islamic organizations in the U.S. with different goals and objectives geared toward meeting the specific needs of the Muslim community. Among these is the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), whose members are predominantly Pakistani and Indian Muslims. ICNA aims at educating its members and building strong spiritual qualities. It focuses less on politics. It also publishes a magazine called *the Message* to educate Muslim youth.⁴⁶⁶

462 Smith, *Islam in America*, p. 169.

463 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

464 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

465 *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. See also Smith, *Islam in America*, pp. 170-71.

466 Smith, p. 171.

International Institute of Islamic Thought & American Muslim Social Scientists

In the 1980s and 90s, numerous Muslim organizations were established on the basis of profession or discipline, such as the Organization of the Muslim Doctors, Muslim Lawyers, Muslim Economists, Muslim Artists, etc. One of these organizations which deals specifically with Islamic scholarship is the Association of the Muslim Social Scientists, which operates under the umbrella of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). It has members from all over the Muslim world. This is an international intellectual forum for Muslims and non-Muslims who have interest in social sciences and Islamic or Muslim issues. It publishes a reputable quarterly journal, *American Journal of Islamic Social Scientists*, which has wide circulation in 45 countries. This journal is published by the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Herndon, Virginia. The Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) was founded in 1982 by a few pioneer Muslim scholars including the late Professor Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, Abdul Hameed Abu Sulayman, Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Jamal al-Barzanji, Hisham Talib, Mona Abul Fadl, Ilyas Ba Yunus, and a few others from the Muslim world. The AMSS aims at promoting Islamic positions in various academic disciplines, serving the interests of Muslim scholars by bringing them into contact with one another and advancing the process of the Islamization of knowledge and publishing Islamic books. In its journal, the AMSS spells out its objectives as follows:

1. Generate Islamic thought and Islamic epistemology through critical and scientific inquiry to improve the condition of Muslim communities and institutions;
2. Help members develop and apply Islamic positions on contemporary issues in their research;
3. Facilitate research and professional development opportunities for US based members, with special emphasis on graduate student development;
4. Encourage institutional development within Muslim communities in the U.S. and abroad through research and application;

5. Create venues for civil dialogue;
6. Develop relationships with other academic institutions and professional organizations, and to work diligently to recapture the excellence of the Islamic intellectual past, which has been overlooked by the West.

The AMSS has organized many national and international conferences locally and abroad where scholars from diverse disciplines present intellectual papers, research work and discuss issues pertinent to the state of Muslims (*ummah*) in the world.

Muslim Women's Organizations

There are also Muslim women's organizations, which focus on the specific needs of Muslim women in America and in the Muslim world. These organizations are very active. They assist Muslim women in attaining their legal rights, in learning more about Islam and the roles women have played in Islamic history. These organizations have been largely underappreciated. One of the most active women organizations is the World Council of Muslim Women Foundation, a non-profit organization that aims at teaching and enhancing women's rights, global peace, and interfaith education from a worldwide perspective. It also works for social justice for all women.⁴⁶⁷ Women's organizations also attempt to critically analyze the excesses of Western feminism. They delineate the clearly defined roles and responsibilities of Muslim women *vis-a-vis* Muslim men. There are several Muslim women's websites that address the needs of women in all aspects of life. It is pertinent to mention that Muslim women in America participate effectively in running Islamic schools, Islamic centers and institutions. Some become officers and board members of their Islamic centers. Holding high positions in the community is an opportunity many were never able to attain or enjoy in their home countries. Muslim women in the U.S. are not oppressed, as many Americans think.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁷ Smith, pp. 171-2.

⁴⁶⁸ It is often said in America that when a Muslim woman covers her head, it is a sign of oppression; but when a nun covers her head, she is fulfilling her religious duty. When a Muslim woman stays at home to nurse her baby, she needs to be liberated, but when an America working mother prefers to stay at home, she

They choose to be Muslims and to dress Islamically. There are many Muslim women who do not wear the head cover (*hijab*). The media exploits what is actually a cultural phenomenon disguised as religious beliefs to those ignorant of orthodox religious teachings. Also, Muslim women are full participants in running and administering the affairs of Muslim communities in the U.S. and are very effective in the mosque. They run outreach programs, social services, and occasionally mini-stores and gift-markets within the Islamic center or mosque. It is true still, though, that in many mosques they are not given ample chance to participate. Some mosques do not have rooms for women to attend. At other few mosques, women are walled off through dividers in such a way that they cannot see men and men cannot see them. At times, they are put in the basement of the mosque and they only see the speaker through TV at basement.

Muslim Institutions in the U.S.

Muslims face tremendous problems when assimilating into American culture, which is based on the notion of secularism, the concept of separating religious ideals from the mundane world. Early Muslim immigrants paid little attention to practicing Islam and to building Islamic institutions. However, it did not take long for them to recognize the need for establishing Islamic institutions, particularly for their children. Their concern for education was great and thus they began to build and establish their own schools. Two institutions have been accorded great importance by Muslims in America: the mosque and the school. "The mosque in the USA is a living institution constantly changing to respond to the changing circumstances of the communities and constituencies it serves."⁴⁶⁹

In America, reference is often made to the mosques established by immigrant Muslims, with less attention paid to the several temples, mosques and schools established by African American Muslims under the leadership of the Nation of Islam. From the time of Noble Drew Ali

until present, African American Muslims have received most of their knowledge about Islam from the Nation of Islam's temples (which were really mosques in disguise). Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, Imam Warithu Deen Mohammad, and Minister Louis Farrakhan devoted much time and energy into building these mosques. They recruited many members and disseminated much information about Islam.

The mosque is a free pulpit for Muslim leaders to transmit and communicate whatever they want to their members. They have no rivals in their own mosques. The importance accorded to the building of the mosque by the Nation of Islam and many other Islamic groups is not new in Islam. The first major task that the Prophet Muhammad undertook on his arrival in Medina in 622 C.E. was the building of a mosque, which became the center of his activities, politically and religiously.

The establishment of mosques in the U.S. has a unique and fascinating history. Many mosques start in private homes, rented apartments, vacant shopping centers, stores, basements, warehouses, etc. All these facilities are turned into mosques, especially on Fridays. And gradually, Muslims would collect donations from people using these facilities and eventually would build their mosques from the ground or convert an existing building into one. Occasionally, Muslims buy vacant churches and turned them into mosques just like Christians in Spain turned mosques into churches. What is unique here is that Islam allows Muslims to pray at any clean place, whether at the mall, school, church, or synagogue. Also, the fact that Christian leaders allow Muslims in the U.S. to use their facilities for prayer exhibits the amount of cooperation and tolerance between these two world religions, and the respect that Christians, at times, accord to Muslims in general. Muslim authorities in Muslim countries rarely allow Christians to observe their prayers in their mosques, despite the fact that the Prophet Muhammad did allow Christians from Najran to stay and pray at the Prophet's mosque in Medina. Islam does not prohibit Muslims from accommodating others at their mosques, especially Christians and Jews.

At present, there are more than one thousand five hundred mosques in America. Most big cities have mosques or Islamic centers. Many of them are ordinary buildings that have been converted into Islamic centers. Only a few are built from the ground as mosques. The

cares and she is applauded, she is a super-mom like Mrs. Al Gore, the wife of vice President to Clinton.

469 Abdel Hamid Lotfi, "Creating Muslim Space in the USA: Masajid and Islamic Centers," in *Islam Christian Muslim Relations*, vol. 12, no. 2 (April 2001): 235-254.

architecture of the mosque represents, in most cases, the worldview of its members. Some architectural patterns are borrowed from Muslim countries like Morocco and Egypt. Others are designed in the U.S. Some even look like churches or restaurants.

Prosperous congregations often transform storefront mosque buildings using imported decoration or ethnic architectural motifs to spell out their distinct identity. According to architectural historian Jerrilynn Dodds, the overwhelming majority of Islamic mosques have recently 'begun to use a set of visual forms that mark them and bind them in the urban landscape.' Visual forms, both architectural and decorative, such as the dome and the arch, are becoming pan-Islamic symbols and are often adopted by congregations originally from other architectural traditions. Because they cannot afford mosques with obvious structural Islamic identities, most Muslim communities use 'decorative devices such as writing, dome-images and the color green' to maintain group boundary and to create a visual identity.⁴⁷⁰

The mosque is where Muslims pray, meet, socialize, plan their activities, educate their members, conduct dialogue, relate to one another, observe the Friday prayer and listen to the Friday sermon (*Khutbat al-Jum'ah*). Some mosques are called Islamic centers because they offer additional services to the community and conduct youth programs. In the 1960s until the 1980s, most mosques were built with the support of Muslim countries and by the efforts of local Muslims. From the 1990s on and especially after the Gulf War, financial support from Arab countries decreased drastically and therefore nearly all the mosques and Islamic centers built recently are sponsored and supported by the efforts of local Muslims through fundraising, levying members, and monthly or annual contributions. Muslim communities made of

people from different nationalities support one another. The growth of mosques in the U.S. is astonishing.

The fact that there are now 33 mosques in the Washington, D. C. area alone illustrates the enormous growth of the mosque in America over five decades. Currently, over 1500 mosques or Islamic centers operate in the United States. Almost 80 percent of these have been established since 1980. New York has the largest number of mosques (*masajid*) with more than 130; California is next with nearly 120. Illinois, New Jersey, Texas, and Michigan also have large numbers of mosques. In terms of ethnic identification, African Americans and Indo-Pakistanis have the largest numbers of mosques, with Arabs next, although as racial-ethnic identities begin to give way to more integrated congregations, such distinctions become less meaningful.⁴⁷¹

It should be pointed out that building mosques and getting permission to erect Islamic centers has not been as easy as establishing or building churches or temples. Neighbors, at times, protest against establishing mosques or building Islamic schools in their neighborhood for fear of Muslims and suspicion of terrorists. Others just cannot accommodate Muslims in their neighborhood due to religious bias. City councils at times put numerous restrictions on Muslims when they apply for permission to build mosques.⁴⁷²

Mosques in American Correctional Institutions

Construction of mosques is not limited to free Muslim members of society. Muslim inmates at American correctional institutions also build their own mosques with their donations and support from prison administration. There are many mosques built to meet the needs of the growing population of Muslims in prison. It is believed that the first Muslim prisoner in the U.S. was Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, an Ahmadiyyah missionary, who was jailed in 1920 for his alleged promotion of polygamous marriage. Shaykh Sadiq was said to have taken this opportunity to propagate Islam in prison.⁴⁷³ As a result, some White people think, and this seems to be especially the case in Pennsylvania, that Islam is the religion of prisoners.

470 Abdelhamid Lotfi, "Creating Muslim Space in the USA: *Masajid* and Islamic Centers," in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 12, no. 2 (April 2001): 235-254, (238).

471 Smith, *Islam in America*, pp. 152-3.

472 Lotfi, pp. 235-254.

473 *Ibid.*, pp. 241-243.

From the 1940s on, many Muslims were jailed for their refusal to register in the army such as Elijah Muhammad and some of his followers in the Nation of Islam. Some inmates convert to Islam in prison due to the strong missionary work from other inmates, who become Muslims and due to the protection and spiritual support that Muslim inmates receive from their Muslim brothers and sisters there. Inmates promote Islam as "a virile and brotherly faith inside the hostile and violent prison environment."⁴⁷⁴

However, schism exists in some mosques in prisons. The Nation of Islam had its own mosques and the followers of Imam Warithu Deen Mohammed had their own mosques, especially in Philadelphia, until both groups were encouraged to pray together in 1999 through the efforts of their Muslim chaplain, Tahir Aderonmu. The prison administration, after many years of consideration, gave support to the unification of the Muslims in Graterford prison and now they all pray together as one community. Those who do not want to pray with other Muslim groups for one reason or another are allowed to perform their prayers and services in their cells. In some states, Christian chaplains are not very sympathetic to inmate conversion to Islam in prison. Thus, they indirectly prevent prisoners from converting to Islam and those who insist on converting are sometimes maltreated. They are not allowed to join congregational prayers or supplied with Islamic dietary foods, particularly during *Ramadan*. It is pertinent to mention that it was in prison that Malcolm X became a Muslim and changed from being a criminal to being a reformer, from somebody who had no hope in life to somebody who lived a better life and gave hope to millions of African Americans. Malcolm X taught African Americans and others that we can change our lives if we want to, and that one's mind cannot be imprisoned when one has the will to change to a better condition.

Islamic Education in America

Islam makes learning and seeking knowledge an obligation upon all Muslims, male and female. The Prophet Muhammad encouraged all Muslims to seek knowledge. This concern for learning can be seen in Muhammad's practice in Medina when he asked the prisoners of war from the Battle of Badr to teach Muslims how to read and write as

474 Ibid., p. 241.

ransom for their freedom. Islam requires Muslim parents to teach their children about religion and moral values. The teaching begins at home with parents taking the responsibility of imparting Islamic knowledge to their children, who are the next generation.

The first generation of Muslims in America, the slaves, could not teach Islam to their offspring because slaveholders separated them or sold the parents to others. However, from the 1920s on, Muslim Americans began to recognize the importance of Islamic education and started establishing schools for their children. By the 1950s, they began to build their own private schools from elementary to junior and senior high. The efforts of the Nation of Islam as pioneer in building Islamic schools, the Sister Clara Muhammad's schools, cannot be overlooked, even though the larger community, especially immigrant Muslims, gives them little credit.

Further, as the numbers of immigrant Muslims grow, leaders become concerned about the education of their children. They are not satisfied with the quality of religious education their children receive in public schools. They object to the lack of moral values and unlimited freedom that students in public schools enjoy. Muslim parents want to be involved in the educations of their children. From 1970 on, Muslims in the United States and Canada vigorously embarked on establishing full-time Islamic schools. Most big cities in the U.S. have one or more full-time schools and nearly all Islamic centers and mosques operate Sunday schools. While Sister Clara Muhammad School established a senior high school in 1975, immigrants run only a handful. Some cities like New York, Washington D. C., Los Angeles and Houston have several full time Islamic schools. SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) endorses some of them, but many are not accredited.

Muslims depend on *Zakat* money and private donations to run their schools. In most cases, Islamic schools use the same public school curriculum or the curriculum of chartered schools. In addition, they teach Arabic and Islamic subjects to students with the hope of inculcating Islamic values in them. They also teach Islamic history and civilization, with emphasis on learning about the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and molding their behavior. There have been many attempts to establish a unified Islamic curriculum for all full-time Islamic schools

in America. Such efforts have not yet been successful. Each school tries out specific curriculum which it develops by itself or borrows from other Muslim schools. One of the leaders in Islamic curriculum is the IQRA Foundation in Chicago.

Islamic schools recruit Muslims and non-Muslims to teach in their schools, even though the majority are usually Muslim. Some parents and concerned Muslims object to the recruitment of non-Muslim teachers on the ground that teachers not only impart knowledge to students but are perceived as role models for students and transmit values. If the goal of the Islamic school is to teach Islam as a way of life, then teachers need to live Islam as a way of life and strongly believe in what they are teaching. And since non-Muslim teachers hold different worldviews, they may impart conflicting values or perspectives. Unfortunately, however true this may be, the Muslim community will continue recruiting non-Muslim teachers until they can train enough Muslim educators to teach their own children. Regrettably too, certified Muslim teachers are a rare commodity. When they are found, they do not want to be paid the lower salaries that Islamic schools often offer.

Since Islamic schools tend to thrive on community donations, they are unable to offer high salaries and huge benefit packages as compared to most public and private schools; hence, the interest in teaching in Muslim schools remains low. What Islamic schools need is balance and focus and to recruit the best teachers they can. As Sommich E. Uddin has pointed out, a balance should be maintained between recruiting non-certified Muslim teachers and certified non-Muslim teachers.

In the push for quality education, there is the danger of making the hiring of personnel an 'all-or-nothing' issue. A board member or administrator, who takes a strong stand for hiring only Muslims to preserve the Islamic orientation of the school may be accused of sacrificing academic quality for religious values. By the same token, an individual who wants to hire only certified (mostly non-Muslim) teachers might be seen as someone who does not care enough about the Islamic environment of the school. Neither characterization seems fair or accurate. We all want what is best for the

children. However, in determining what is best, we often feel pressured to do what is expedient.⁴⁷⁵

Principals, headmasters, and headmistresses try to make sure that those who teach in Islamic schools have college degrees in education and hold teaching certificates.⁴⁷⁶ Teachers of Arabic and Islamic studies are mostly Arabs. There are a few less qualified Arabic teachers among American converts.

What actually distinguishes Islamic schools from non-Islamic is that students at Islamic schools are free to learn about their religious beliefs without humiliation or derision from their peers since they are nearly all Muslims. They are free to discuss Islam and encouraged to be proud of it. It is surprising to see some Christians enroll their kids in Islamic schools due to the safety and drug free environments they provide. There are occasional problems in Muslim schools but they are far less serious when they are compared to the problems and crimes committed in public schools. There is no smoking or drinking of alcohol in Islamic schools. Proper dress is recommended during physical training or exercises and during swimming. Boys and girls do not swim together at the same time in the same pool. In most cases, girls in the 5th and upper grades are encouraged to wear scarves. Islamic food is served at Muslim schools and students often offer afternoon prayer (*Zuhr*) on school premises in congregation. Dress codes and uniforms are used.

Muslim schools offer all required subjects that the school board of the state in which it is located requires plus additional subjects in Arabic and Islamic studies. Some curriculum contains wrong information about Islam, especially in history and social studies classes. Muslim teachers are required by their boards of education to check the curriculum for misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims before any textbooks are endorsed for usage. The primary goals of Islamic schools are to provide quality educations, teach Islam, the Arabic language and keep students away from the perceived dangers of public schools. A good model of an Islamic school is Al-Hedayah Academy

475 Sommich Uddin, "Staffing Challenges: Muslim Schools Face a Dilemma when Hiring Staff," in *Islamic Horizon*, vol. 29, no. 3 (May/June 2000): 40-41.

476 Certified teachers are individuals that hold teaching license that is issued by the State.

in Fort Worth, Texas. Al-Hedayah is a full-time Islamic school for children in Pre-K-10. A few members of the Islamic Association of Tarrant County in Fort Worth established this school in 1992. In the first year, classes were offered in a rented house; later the school was moved to a mosque until a new building was erected in 1997. In 1997, 80 students registered at al-Hedayah and in the 2004-2005 academic year there were more than 180 students registered, with ten teachers, one headmistress, one secretary and two aids. Under the leadership of Dr. Nizam Peerwani, Education Committee Chair and Board of Directors, and also the Chief Medical Examiner for Tarrant County in Fort Worth, Al-Hedayah has grown steadily and won accreditation from SACS in December 2003. Past school administration including Dr. Lynda Mubarak, an African American educator, helped catapult Al-Hedayah into becoming a successful Islamic school while establishing a solid reputation in the Fort Worth and Arlington Muslim communities for its quality education and dedicated staff.⁴⁷⁷

Islamic Education at Colleges and Universities

Muslims lag behind in the U.S. in establishing higher educational institutions. There are two universities established by Muslims, the American Islamic College in Chicago in 1983 and the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Virginia. The former awards Bachelor Degrees and the latter awards Master Degrees. Nowadays, there are a few higher Islamic institutions: American Islamic University in Chicago, Muslim Teacher's College in Randolph, Virginia, and American Open University in Michigan. The latter is affiliated with Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. The International Institute of Islamic Thoughts offers Bachelor and Master degrees in Islamic Studies. Both American Open University and Open Islamic University offer their courses through

correspondence on Internet. These institutions provide opportunities to Muslim communities in America to study Islam with qualified Islamic scholars who are versed in Islamic tradition and Islamic sciences.

It is surprising that despite the great number of immigrant Muslims in the U.S. and their huge resources and wealth, they have not establish graduate schools offering Doctorate degrees to Muslims in America. This is not to say that there are no institutions that award higher degrees in Islamic studies and sciences in the U.S. In my article on the contents of Islamic studies curricula at American universities, I mentioned about seventy-seven colleges that teach several courses on Islam and offer graduate and undergraduate degrees - Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, taught more than sixty courses on Islam in the 1990s. The department of religion at Temple University, Philadelphia, offers more than forty courses on Islam; and the department of Islamic studies at McGill University in Montreal in Canada offers several courses on Islam and its civilization.⁴⁷⁸ A few other private institutions like Texas Christian University in Fort Worth teach two courses on Islam. Some seminaries train their seminarians about Islam in order to mission to Muslims. It should be pointed out that the scholarly study of Islam in academia is not as objective as many Americans think. Islam and its sciences are often taught at seminaries as the 'other' religion whose members must be brought to Christianity. The academic study of Islam is heavily charged with ideological misconceptions as alluded to by Blankinship, the chairman of the Department of Religion at Temple University.

This is so because scholars, whatever their personal preferences, do not [always] seek knowledge merely for knowledge's sake, but work, whether they like it or not, to serve the practical needs of the society that provides their living. Since their efforts gain for them both financial reward and respect, one will have to admit that such efforts are important. Indeed, especially in the United States, they are intimately connected with the power structure that dominates in this country

477 There are a few pioneers who helped in the establishment of al-Hedayah Academy. Among them are: Imam Moujahed Bakhiach, Brother Khalid from Kuwaid, Sister Muhammad, Walid Joulani, Brother Hassan, Dr. Itani, brother Usamah and his wife, Sister Ayman and her husband and Sister Fadiyah Peerwani. In terms of educational support, the following had and continue to assist the school: Mr. Abdul Hafiz Yusuf, Sister Paris, Mr. Tahir Ismail, Sister Abir Charillah, Sister Mitchell Nasrallah, Sister Rabah, Sister Carole Sturm, brother Yushau Sodiq and many others.

478 Yushau Sodiq, "The Content of Islamic Studies Curricula in American Universities," in *Proceedings of the Second Annual Symposium of the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America (IIASA)*, Fairfax, Virginia, 1997, pp. 11-25.

and increasingly seeks to expand its influence in the world.⁴⁷⁹

While Muslims claim that they learn about their religion and teach their children, families, and friends to practice it, the study of Islam in the world of academia, since its inception, has been characterized as a means of control in the Muslim world. Thus, Islam and Muslims are often portrayed in a negative way so that one hardly appreciates its contributions to civilization and the sciences.

There is no doubt that the controlling academic discourse in the field of Islamic studies is highly prejudiced against Islam, which is described albeit in subtle and polite language, as racist, sexist, theocratic, totalitarian, obscurantist, backward, anti-progressive, anti-scientific, barbaric, torturing, terroristic, and incapable of analytical thinking. This cascade of bias is hardly ameliorated by the weaker counter-tendency to praise Islam's medieval accomplishments, especially those of Muslim Spain, which was, after all, a part of Europe and in any case has been gone for over five hundred years. Modern Muslims are universally denounced, being regarded often in inert obstacles to progress, except to the extent to which they toe the Western line. This has caused many Muslim scholars in the West to throw away their Islamic identification completely for a secularist one, following in the wake of Near Eastern Christians, who of course are not Muslims at all and often have had little motivation to speak up in favor of Islam, especially as a religion.⁴⁸⁰

Islam and the Media in America

Islamophobia is the general term used to describe the treatment of Islam and Muslims in the American media. Islamophobia alludes to the

479 Khalid Y. Blankinship, *Islamic Studies at Universities in the United States*, in *Proceedings of the 1st Annual Symposium of the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America*, Fairfax, Virginia, 1993), pp. 25-6.

480 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

presentation of Islam in a way that frightens the audience because of the dreadful and hateful ways in which Muslims and Islamic events and issues are conveyed. Islamic issues are politically charged and Muslims are given different labels.

To many Americans, embracing the Islamic faith – cousin to Judaism and Christianity – is tantamount to the certification of terrorism. Probably no religious minority in this nation [America] is treated with such suspicion as are Muslims.⁴⁸¹

Media coverage of Islamic and Muslim issues is pathetic in most cases. It tends to give saturation level coverage to Islamic terroristic extremism because it makes "good news, compelling television programs, and a hot subject for public debate." The cause of such a negative portrayal is not new in Islam. When Muhammad first announced himself a prophet, he was immediately rejected and ridiculed by his own tribe and labeled an imposter attempting to plant seeds of division among Arabs. The people of Mecca perceived his call to moral values a threat to their leadership and control of the masses. Alas, they left no stone untouched to discredit him and his followers to the extent that wherever he went, some Meccans, including his uncle Abu Lahab, escorted him to discredit his preaching and disprove his words. After his victory over the Arabs, he reached out to other people, the Jews and Christians. He was again disowned and many allegations were waged against him. He defended himself vigorously and insisted on spreading his message until he died. After him, his companions carried and spread Islam among the Christians until they were conquered during the Byzantine Empire. From that time on, Islam and Muslims were and continue to be portrayed by Christian leaders as evil. Muslims are often portrayed as dangerous and uncivilized people who do not love Christians and hate peace. Such portrayal has led to many wars in the past, among which are the Crusade wars in 1099 and 1198 as well as those in Spain in 1492, and the Iraqi war in 2003 under the pretext of waging war against Muslim terrorists.

481 Columnist Howard Kleinberg, "Subsequent Bias Manifested in Zoning Issue," in *Island Packet*, Hilton Head, South Carolina, April 17, 1996, p. 6A.

In America, Islamophobia began to be seen most clearly in the 1950s, after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 and after the Iranian revolution of 1979. Islamophobia includes the assumption that Muslim cultures and civilizations are monolithic and unchanging. There are many damaging generalizations about Islam and Muslims that circulate. That is, all Muslims are perceived to be acting the same way regardless of their ethnicity or cultural background. In other words, whenever a Muslim person does something warranting media coverage, the media capitalizes on the person's Islamic connection rather than looking into the socio-cultural factors that framed the individual's thought and actions. Whatever an Arab Muslim does is believed to be what all other Muslims would do. If he is fanatic, then all other Muslims must be fanatic. If he lies, all other Muslims must be liars. But when he does good, his kindness will not be generalized. At the same time, if an American Muslim uses drugs, it is assumed that all Muslims must be using drugs. In other words, Muslims are seen to be following and practicing the same negative thing wherever they are. Their different cultures or individual personalities have no bearing on them according to the Western media. Related to this monolithic idea is the notion that Muslim cultures are not compatible with rationality or modernity; their people always act irrationally and thus they carry out terrorist acts without thinking of the aftermath of their actions. When Muslim women insist on wearing loose or thick dress even during the summer seasons, they are perceived to be different and people think that all Muslim women must dress the same way. But Muslim women from different Islamic countries dress differently and their environment contributes to how they dress and appear in public. If a Muslim in Lebanon fights a Hindu, then all Muslims in Lebanon and Arab countries will be perceived as enemies of Hindus. It is an "Either you're with us or against us" mentality.

On the political level, coverage of Islam and Muslims in American media has been pathetic. The media, government officials, the so called "experts" on Islam – journalists, correspondents from the Middle East, corporate experts, and free lancers – all too frequently portray Islam as an uncivilized religion and synonymous with terrorism and religious hysteria. Muslims are portrayed as terrorists, militant, heartless people and irrational human beings who hate the West and what it stands

for. The fear of Islam has been gradually planted into the hearts of the American people, who strongly believe that Islam is a threat to American democracy and freedom. But, in reality, Muslims do not hate Americans; many dislike the American government's policies in the Middle East and in the Muslim world as well as the double standard it often employs. Many Muslims believe that the American government promotes democracy in America but hinders its development in the Arab world by protecting monarchies like the ones in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, and supporting military presidents such as in Egypt and elsewhere, who are in fact oppressive leaders.

The portrayal of Muslims as infidels, heretics, and enemies of Christianity or Judaism is not new but has grown in intensity from the time of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Resistance to the occupation of Palestinian land by Israel, the demolishing of Arab homes and destruction of Palestinian properties are seen as legitimate military defense, which wins the endorsement of the U.S. government. Also, the West considered the resistance of Muslim clergy to the corrupt Iranian government of Shah Rida Pahlawi a sign of hate for Western values and American democracy. On the contrary, Palestinians claim that they are fighting for their freedom from Zionist occupation, while Iranians fought to free themselves from foreign domination and servitude to the West, which does not want Iran to develop technically.

On the other hand, the U.S. government cannot understand why it lost Iran to the Muslim clergy. The reason in our opinion is that the U.S. government plays double standard game in its policies toward the Middle East and Iran. While it promotes freedom of speech at home, it helped the Shah government in Iran arrest all opposition leaders and turned Rida Shah into a tyrant whose subjects were not free to raise any objection against him. Eventually, the Iranian people were tired of the Shah's oppression and atrocities and unequal distribution of wealth. Hence, they embarked on what Frederick Engels called "*Social Act*," a collective action by the poor masses against the leaders of Iran who controlled their wealth and properties.

In 1979, Iran officially became an Islamic state and rejected anything America. It detained many Americans and held them hostage. Iranians perceived Americans, at that time, as agents of evil in their country who wanted freedom for their people but not for the Iranians. Since the

time of the detention of the American hostages, the American media began to portray Islam as an evil religion. All Iranians were wrongly believed to be Muslim despite the fact that some of them are Christian, Bahai, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Ironically, many Americans think that Iranians are Arabs since they are Muslims. And since they are Arabs, they are bad people. While there is no doubt that many Iranians and Arabs have not succumbed to the American government's policies in the Middle East, the American government pays little attention to why these people dislike them and want them to leave their countries. It is ironic that the American government supports monarchies in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Syria. Yet it does not support elected governments in Iran or Algeria. In general, Arabs and Muslims are portrayed as:

... mystical as the old portrait of the Jews: they robed, turbaned, sinister, and dangerous. They showed them as engaging in hijacking airlines, and blowing up public buildings. It seems that the human race cannot discriminate between a tiny minority of persons who may be objectionable, and the ethnic strain from which they spring.⁴⁸²

In movies and the visual arts, mockery of Arabs and Muslims is rampant and blatant.

From 1986 to 1995, I tracked features telecast on St. Louis, Missouri, cable and network channels and found that 15 to 20 movies a week are telecast that mock or denigrate Arab Muslims. Viewers see American adolescents, intelligence agents, military personnel, even inspector Clouseaus's son, massacring obnoxious Arab Muslims in numerous films such as *Navy Seals 1990*, *Killing Streets 1991*, *The Human Shield 1992*, *The Son of the Pink Panther 1993*, *Bloodfist V: Human Target 1994* and *True Lies 1994*.⁴⁸³

482 Columnist Sydney Harris in his article "The World Shrinks and Stereotypes Fall," *Detroit Free Press*, April 11, 1986.

483 Jack G. Shaheen *Arab and Muslim Stereo-Typing in American Popular Culture*, Washington D.C. Georgetown University: Center for Muslim-Christian

Shaheen argues that filmmakers intentionally play on negative Arab Muslim stereotypes and prejudicial dialogue, which in truth have nothing to do with Arabs or the Middle East. He cites the examples of films like *Red* (1981), *Cloak and Dagger* (1984), *Power* (1986), *American Samurai* (1992), and *Point of No Return* (1993).⁴⁸⁴ After September 11th, hundreds of films have been produced to mock and ridicule Muslims and portray them as "the terrorists." There are many examples of negative portrayals of Muslims in the daily and weekly news, magazines and newsletters. There are a few occasions on which reporters have been invited to mosques to cover Muslim festivals like during the *Eid al-Fitr* (end of *Ramadan* feast). They come and take pictures of the shoes, which Muslims leave at the entrance of their mosques. Thus, they focus on shoes and how they are not arranged rather than on the feast Muslims are celebrating. Such portrayals are negative representations of Muslims. However, there are instances when the media portrays Islam and Muslims objectively and positively. Those reporters inclined to write positively and objectively about Islam and Muslims often meet with great opposition from their bosses, senior editors, anchormen or women. Since the Iraqi war in March 2003 until present, Muslims and Islam have been routinely victimized. Not a week passes without seeing some reporter making a mockery of Islam and Muslims. There are hundreds of video games, too, that portray Islam and Muslims negatively. Almost all television shows and films that depict government opposition, hostage situations, black market arms deals and the like use the stereotypical Middle Eastern Arab as the mastermind or terroristic group member. Viewers have come to see this as the norm. The world is now looking at Muslims through a proprietary lens that often clouds and distorts the view, thus, disbaring the facts.

Summary

Islam has been in America since its discovery. It is not a new religion in the new world as many people assume. African slaves were the first large groups of Muslims imported to America. While many of them

Understanding: History and International Affairs, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, 1997), p. 13.

484 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

could not practice Islam publicly due to their bondage, a few bravely held to their religion and practiced it secretly as much as they could. They could not transmit Islam to their descendants and succeeding generations. Islam neither triumphed nor died away completely in its early stage.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Islam witnessed a revival in the U.S. through the efforts of a mysterious leader named Noble Drew Ali. He invited Blacks to believe in Islam and wrongly convinced them that they originated from Asia. His main goal was to give African Americans an identity, a sense of belonging, and an established culture they could be proud of after they had been relegated to the lowest status of humanity. The slaveholders perceived the Blacks as "nobodies" and treated them like animals or even less. Noble Drew Ali saw this and wanted to give Blacks an identity. He founded the Moorish Temple, but this association did not live long and nearly dismantled after his death due to internal crisis and the struggle for leadership.

Around 1930, another Muslim leader came to the scene in the person of Wallace Fard, a mysterious personality whose real identity remains obscure today. Wallace Fard claimed to be a descendant of different parents who came from different countries. He finally announced that he was born in Mecca (Saudi Arabia), the holy city of Islam. He called his followers to believe in Islam. Many African Americans rallied around him and he named his group *The Lost Found Nation of Islam in the Wilderness*, later to be known as the Nation of Islam. His followers strongly believed that he would help them get out of their predicament. He tried his best for them and was elevated to the status of God before he miraculously disappeared in 1934 without a trace. Little is known thereafter about him.

After his disappearance, one of the most influential and able leaders among African Americans assumed leadership of the Nation of Islam - Honorable Elijah Muhammad. He restructured the Nation of Islam and made it a strong movement, which survives until today. It is from the Nation of Islam that many other Muslim sects in America emerged. The NOI produces leaders like Malcolm X (Alhaj Malik Shabbaz), Minister Louis Farrakhan and Imam Warithu Deen Mohammed. Even though Malcolm X died before Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm's

role and contributions to a better understanding of Islam as a non-racist religion cannot be overlooked. Malcolm X remains one of the most admired African American Muslim leaders in the U.S. and in the Muslim world.

After the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, his son Warithu Deen Mohammed became the leader of the Nation of Islam. He accepted some of his father's ideas but rejected his father's claim to prophethood and the supremacy of the Black race. He corrected ideological mistakes he felt his father had made and set a new vision for the NOI. He worked hard until he won the recognition of orthodox Muslims and gradually taught his group true Islam. He changed many things his father had introduced to Islam that are not truly Islamic. Unfortunately, Minister Louis Farrakhan objected to the changes that Imam Mohammed introduced and in 1978 withdrew his support for Imam Mohammed, re-established the Nation of Islam as conceived by Elijah Muhammad, and renewed the racist ideology espoused by the Nation of Islam. Many African Americans who did not support the changes introduced by Imam Mohammed joined Minister Louis Farrakhan. Thus, until his death in September 8, 2008, the two major African American Muslim leaders were Imam Mohammed and Minister Louis Farrakhan. Both groups gave little attention to joining American politics until the 1980s, when they started encouraging their members to vote and seek political positions locally and nationally to serve the interests of African American Muslims.

Immigrant Muslims on their part contributed to the spread of Islam by establishing many mosques and educational institutions, particularly Sunday and full-time Islamic schools in all major cities in the U.S. and Canada. Islam grows steadily in America and Muslim leadership has begun to improve, providing and meeting the societal needs of its members. This author feels that many Muslims are not reaching out enough to Americans. They fail to participate in local and state activities in their communities. Muslims' failure to reach out keeps many Americans ignorant about Islam and reinforces stereotypical ideas they hold about Muslims, especially the portrayal of Muslims as "other" individuals who do not belong here in America. They are perceived as aliens or terrorists who should not reside in America.

Despite this stereotyping, Muslims have slowly but steadily considered America their homeland and began to build community relationships by establishing Islamic institutions like mosques, clinics, Muslim community centers and schools. The mosques became centers where they meet, pray, socialize and plan their social activities. Building Islamic schools did not become the priority of Muslims in America until the 1980s when many immigrant Muslims finally recognized that they were not going to return to their original countries. They started slowly and today many cities in the U.S. have full-time Islamic schools. There are even some high schools too. Efforts to build strong Islamic colleges or universities in America have not succeeded, and those that are available are not well funded. Nevertheless, Muslims strongly believe that Islam has a bright future in the U.S. despite the negative labels attached. Many established Muslim communities are flourishing and meeting the needs of generations of American Muslims. Islam has many good things to offer to the people of America, especially moral values, which Americans yearn for.

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Chapter XIII

Islam and *Jihad*

The Meanings of *Jihad* in Islam

The word *Jihad* connotes a wide range of meanings from mere struggling to enrich oneself spiritually to bearing arms to defend oneself, one's country and beliefs. The word *Jihad* is one of the most misinterpreted and misunderstood terms in the West, especially after the attacks on Western institutions. Literally, *Jihad* is an Arabic word that means struggling and striving, and applies to any effort exerted by a person. Thus, a man who works hard to put food on his family's table is making *Jihad*. A person who studies to gain an education and works hard to earn a higher grade is making *Jihad*. A doctor or nurse who assists his patients is making *Jihad*. Struggling to achieve a specific goal is *Jihad*. Therefore, both Muslims and non-Muslims engage in *Jihad* in their daily lives.

From an Islamic point of view, *Jihad* means striving in the cause of God and His ways by recognizing Him and abiding by His rules as set forth in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. However, it should be pointed out that in most cases, doing something for God entails doing it for the sake of the community. God's name is employed in order to earn rewards for one's action. Of course, Islam is a utilitarian religion⁴⁸⁵ in the sense that you earn good credit for good deeds and bad credit for any evil deed. Socially, *Jihad* means resisting the pressure of others against oneself,

485 In Islam, every action is calculated. When a Muslim does a good deed, he earns 10 – 700 rewards / credit points for it. If he does an evil deed, he earns one bad point for it. If he repents, the bad credit will be removed. See *Qur'an* 6: 160.

like the pressure exerted by parents, peers, and society, by upholding Islam and staying on the right path. When an American converts to Islam, he is making *Jihad* by upholding his new faith; he resists pressures that tempt him to revert to his old faith (*Qur'an* 31:15; 29:8). In addition, *Jihad* is identified with the idea of striving for righteous deeds: to command the good and forbid the evil (*Qur'an* 3:104, 110). This type of *Jihad* includes mission work, specifically inviting others to embrace Islam. This form of *Jihad* is common among Muslims since every Muslim claims to have the responsibility of being a missionary for Islam with the aim of promoting justice and peace.

Politically, *Jihad* means exerting effort to defend one's life against an enemy, to defend one's country/nation against aggression from foreign invasion and to remove treacherous people from power. Muslims refer to this type of *Jihad* as a last resort for it may involve bearing arms to defend one's life, family, or country. Occasionally, this is translated as "holy war." In Islamic terminology, it is a war against evil (*Harb*) or fighting an aggressor (*Qital al-Dhalim*). Undoubtedly, Muslims have engaged in this type of war in the past and at present. Such political *Jihad* must be a just, defensive and exceptional form of warfare for the maintenance of peace and protection of human rights. On this basis, Ali Mazrui sees Islamic *Jihad* as an agenda of global peace and justice, thereby transforming what is taken to be a negative image of Islam into a signal for economic unity and world peace. *Jihad* is a war against injustice, oppression, and the exploitation of the masses in order to protect the nation of Islam from aggression from within and from without. From a legal perspective, Muslim jurists define *Jihad* as fighting or killing those who wage wars against Muslims or occupy their land.

With all these interpretations, legal and political *Jihad* can simply be considered the military aspect of an Islamic state. It does what a government's army does in other nations: defends the land and protects its citizens. The caliph or the head of a Muslim state, with the advice of his consultative members (*shura board*), determines whom to fight, why, when, and how to fight. When individuals or a group of people take *Jihad* into their hands, this is termed *terrorism* in Islam and those individuals or groups should be stopped by all legitimate means possible.

The activities of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers at the advent of Islam in Mecca between 610-622 C. E. were known as *Jihad*—the struggle to invite people to Islam and establish a just and a balanced society. Muslims in Mecca strove day and night to maintain their identities as new converts to Islam. They encountered insurmountable problems; yet, they never doubted that they were on the right path. The Quraysh, Muhammad's tribe, rejected Muhammad, tortured him and his followers and forced them into exile in 615 C. E. Muslims at that stage were tolerant and never responded with violence to the Quraysh's atrocities. They bore what they could and eventually emigrated when they could no longer endure the persecution. The Muslim's response at Mecca was called *Jihad*—the power to restrain the enemy without force or violence. Some Muslim scholars argue that the Muslims in Mecca did not respond to the Quraysh's harsh and inhumane treatment because they were small in number and weak. If they had responded with force, the Quraysh would have crushed them. Others disagree with this analysis. Whatever the case may be, Muslims were tolerant in Mecca and Muhammad concentrated on building a foundation for his new religion; he was not combative at all despite the fact that some of his followers were severely persecuted. Therefore, *Jihad* during the early 13 years Muhammad spent in Mecca was struggling and striving to adhere to Islam. Muslims restrained themselves as stated in the *Qur'an*: "And bear with patience what they utter, and part from them with a fair taking (*Qur'an* 73:10). "Repel evil with that which is better." (*Qur'an* 23:96)

In 622 C. E., Muhammad immigrated to Medina to escape the persecution of the Quraysh. In Medina, he established himself as the spiritual and political leader of Muslims and formed an Islamic state. It was in Medina that he made treaties with different tribes and religious groups such as Christians and Jews. He fought back against the people of Mecca, who considered him a threat to their businesses and traditions. While in Medina, he did engage in various battles with the Quraysh. At times, he won and occasionally he lost. At times, he sent his military men to talk with the neighboring Bedouins to invite them to Islam. At times, force was used to subdue those who fought him. Thus, in the past, Muslims did not rule out the use of force to expand their religion. While many of the battles that Muhammad engaged in were defensive,

some of them were aggressive, a reality that Muslim biographies have documented. Muhammad affirmed that God gave him permission to fight back against the polytheists of Mecca because they had wronged and oppressed the Muslims. (*Qur'an* 22:39-41). There are other verses in the *Qur'an* that exhort Muslims to be steadfast when they encounter their enemies.

After the death of the Prophet in 632 C. E., Muhammad's followers, particularly the caliphs, expanded Islam to all Arabian peninsulas. Those nations who accepted Islam or concluded treaties with Muslims remained in their lands and retained their positions, and those who rejected Islam and refused to pay the tax-roll to Muslims were fought and conquered. In that period the understanding of the meaning of *Jihad* began to shift from mere struggling to uphold one's religion to aggressive fighting, which led to the building of Arab empires: the Ummayyad and Abbasid. The leaders of these empires claimed that they were fighting to spread the word of God and to promote Islam. They were occasionally accused of fighting to accumulate wealth and expand their territories; they paid little attention to the real practice of Islam.

Nevertheless, as they expanded, legal theories emerged as to the real meaning of *Jihad*, how it should be fought, who the enemies were, and if they were conquered how their properties should be distributed among the Muslim armies. Since Islamic law developed during the 3rd and 4th centuries of Islam, Muslim jurists detailed various laws pertaining to *Jihad*. Those jurists perceived the universe as two worlds: the abode of Islam, the world of peace (*dar al-Islam*) and the abode of *Kufr*, the world of war (*Dar al-Harb*). Muslims reign in the first world while non-believers reign in the second world. The People of the Book, Christians and Jews, were considered the *dhimmis* (the protected community). The early Muslims believed that non-believers should be brought back to the realm of Islam peacefully or through *Jihad* so as to protect Islam from foreign aggression.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the early Muslims understood *Jihad* as both struggling and striving for a better life as well as fighting non-believers who prevented Islam from spreading. Islam is understood hence as a universal religion. As Islam developed, the concept of *Jihad* became stronger and more structured. However, there are diverse perceptions about Islamic *Jihad* that cannot be fairly forced

into a single wrapping. Muslim and non-Muslim scholars also offer a range of views. The insistence that non-believers should be brought to Islam by various means remains controversial among Muslim scholars in the past and at present. However, Western scholars strongly fault Muslim's claim that Islam is a religion of peace. To them, Islam has never meant peace for idolaters (*Mushrikun*), or Christians and Jews for that matter. The idolaters had to abandon their beliefs before they could enjoy peaceful living with Muslims, while Christians and Jews must pay a tax for their freedom if they were to live peacefully under Muslim rule.

Jihad in the Qur'an

The concept of war in the *Qur'an* is complicated. As with any other religious text, one finds in the *Qur'an* whatever one searches for. The verses on war in the *Qur'an* can be translated and understood in different ways. Certainly, there are several verses which express the normal attitude of inviting others to Islam peacefully:

Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition and argue against (non-believers) with that which is better, for your Lord knows best who has strayed from his path and who has been guided (*Qur'an* 16:22).

There are other verses that allow Muslims to fight their enemies for defensive purposes, as in *Qur'an* 22:39 whereby *Allah* gave permission to Muslims in Medina to defend themselves and their religion.

Permission is given to those who have been fought against that they have been wronged: Those who have been wrongly expelled from their homes only because they say: 'Our Lord is *Allah*,' for God is most powerful for their aid. (*Qur'an* 22:39)

Due to these verses, many Muslims, especially "modernists," argue that Islam allows fighting only for defensive purposes. They argue that if Muslims were not persecuted and wronged in Mecca, they would not be requested to fight back. However, other verses in the *Qur'an* sanction

fighting against non-believers if they prevent Islam from spreading. It is conceived on such occasions that Muslims have the right to preach their religion and any attempt to stop its spread amounts to aggression against Islam. This is what the Western world called "Holy war," a term which was coined by the West during the Crusades. The often-quoted verse for legitimizing the fight against non-Muslims is:

But when the Sacred months are past, then kill the idolaters wherever you find them, seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, establish regular prayers, and pay the alms tax, then open the way for them, for God is oft-forgiven, most merciful. (*Qur'an* 9: 5)

Similar verses and *Qur'an* 2:216 mean, Muslim jurists (*fuqaha*) insist, that Muslims should be in a state of preparedness to defend Islam even if it is by bearing arms. Hence, both defensive and offensive war can find its origin and legitimacy in the *Qur'an*. Many Muslims today remain ambivalent as to which side a believer should subscribe. Should Muslims wait to be attacked by enemies before they respond? Should they embark on preemptive war by initiating attack on others whom they perceive as a potential threat to their religion, lives and existence? There are no easy answers to these questions.

In the past, especially during the Prophet's time and during the Umayyad and Abbasid empires, Muslims had engaged both in defensive and offensive wars against others. In those situations, they justified their actions as legitimate and necessary to defend and protect Islam and Muslims. Muhammad gave non-Muslims, Jews and Christians, the right to practice their religions in the treaty of Medina. It was during the Abbasid period specifically that Muslim leaders accommodated non-Muslims, recruited them and allowed them to develop and retain their faiths and identities. Hence, Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived peacefully together under Abbasid leadership. Of course, there were a few instances where they fought one another. But generally the atmosphere was favorable and peaceful for both Muslims and non-Muslims. As a result, they developed together and achieved a high degree of accomplishment in all fields of knowledge: in sciences, astronomy, chemistry, literature, and medicine. It should be pointed out, however,

that Muslims were the leaders of the world then and eventually they dictated the terms upon which to relate to other peoples. Muslim scholars in the medieval age, for whatever reasons, divided the world into two categories: the world of peace and the world of war. Those who do not fall into one of these categories are known as *Dhimmi*s, the protected people. These are the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians. They were given special treatment by Muslims and accorded great respect. And since they did not pay *Zakat* to the Muslim treasury, they were requested by law to pay a poll tax for the protection they received and the services that Muslims provided for them. Their situations were analogous to immigrant people or residents in the U.S. today, where the immigrants who possess no alien-card (green card) work and pay taxes but are not able to benefit from the government they pay taxes to in terms of receiving social security and other benefits. Many Christians and Jews perceived the payment of taxes to Muslim authorities in the medieval age as discrimination against them. They substantiated their point by referring to many quotations from Islamic legal books that define *Jihad* as fighting against non-believers and subjugating them until they surrender to Muslim leadership and accept the worship of only one God, *Allah*. Rudolph Peters, in his work *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*, has detailed, with references, the meaning of *Jihad* as explicated by early Muslim jurists. He draws his conclusions from the classical Islamic books, especially from the *al-Muwatta* of Imam Malik, one of the founders of the school of law in Islam and from Ibn Rushd in his encyclopedic work *Bidayat al-Mujtahid*. Both scholars defined *Jihad* and narrated the Prophet's sayings about it. Imam Malik believed that Muhammad strongly encouraged believers to participate in *Jihad* to bring people to Islam and to establish justice on earth for the reward that awaits them regardless of whether they won the war or lost it. If these analyses are taken literally, it supports the idea that a Muslim must always fight non-believers. Hence it becomes a duty that every Muslim must carry out. It should be pointed out that most of what was written in Islamic legal books was developed after the Prophet; it was socially conditioned and therefore could not be applied to all conditions of all Muslims. These writings should not be understood literally in our opinion or taken out of context.

On the other hand, all the rules guiding *jihad* can be translated merely as rules guiding the national army of any country. However, many Muslims scholars argue that *jihad* even when it involves the use of force is not meant for purposes of domination, achieving personal, territorial or economical gains, or to exercise power and control over others as proven in *Qur'an* 2:190-191. Therefore, during the reigns of the Muslims, they allowed leaders of the conquered territories to govern themselves as occurred in many Asian and African countries. When Muhammad conquered Mecca, he did not impose any leader on them but chose leaders from among them to lead themselves in Mecca, and he returned to Medina. Eventually, many of them became Muslims voluntarily. The process of Islamization (the introduction of Islam and its tenets to people) was gradual and not established by force. The people of the conquered territories continued to speak their languages, retained their cultures, and even adjudicated themselves according to their native laws. There was no attempt to annihilate those who rejected Islam. Where the army conquered non-literate peoples or tribes, Muslim leaders used to establish their rule there, assert their presence and introduce Islamic laws side-by-side with the native law. But that was a rare occurrence.

Jihad During the Crusade Period

Islam's first encounter with the People of the Book was in Medina. There, Muhammad on his arrival found some Jewish residents. He sought their support and concluded a treaty (the treaty of Medina) with them in 624 C. E. That treaty did not last long for both Muslims and Jews stepped on each other's toes. Eventually, Jews were exiled from Medina. Living in exile was not new to the Jews, for since their emergence in history, they never had their own permanent state until 1948. After the death of Muhammad, Muslim leaders embarked upon an expansion of the Muslim state and consequently Jerusalem fell under their control in 638 C. E. during the reign of Umar bin al-Khattab, the second caliph. He allowed Christians and Jews to continue practicing their religions. Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived there peacefully for centuries until the Seljuk took over in 1076 C. E. and drastically changed the atmosphere of peaceful coexistence. This unhealthy

situation and a few other events angered the Christians, who rallied together and waged holy wars against Islam and drove Muslims away from Jerusalem under the pretext that Muslims wanted to convert all Christians into Islam.

It was the Christians who invented the words "Holy War." In 1095, the Pope encouraged Christians to fight and free Jerusalem from the hands of Muslims, whom he called infidels. His call at the Council of Clermont was warmly received and within a short period of time, Christian leaders in Europe united and launched terrible and devastating attacks on Muslims in 1099. Muslims were unaware of the Christian plots. They were woefully defeated in Jerusalem and mercilessly killed. The Christians considered such a massacre a revenge for what the Muslims, particularly the Turks, had done to them in the past. It was described by Christians themselves as cruel barbarianism and acts of savagery in the name of God:

It was a heady venture, combining pent-up resentment against the Saracens with the hope for spiritual regeneration of both individuals, who dedicated themselves for the venture and for a morally lax Christendom itself. It was supported early by the medieval papacy and by the feudal knights and commoners alike.⁴⁸⁶

Even before the 1095 meeting, Christian hatred for Muslims and their control of many Christian areas had motivated many leaders to prepare themselves for war against Muslims in the name of Jesus. For instance, in 1084 Pope Gregory VII named the Knights of Robert Guiscard "Knights of Christ"; they were ready to do whatever they were told in the name of Christ without any question. They were the terrorists of the 11th century.

Muslims accepted their defeat but vowed to seek revenge. It took a whole century before Muslims, under the leadership of Salahu-deen (Saladin) from Egypt, waged a devastating war against Christian Crusaders in Jerusalem until it fell in 1187 C. E. never to be re-conquered

486 Jane I. Smith, "Islam and Christendom," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, edited by John Esposito (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999), pp. 387-8.

by Christians. Contrary to the expectation of Christian leaders around the world at that time, Salahu-deen treated the conquered Jews and Christians fairly and humanely; he allowed them to stay and continue the practice of their religions. Their places of worship were not destroyed; however, some of them were turned into mosques, because many Christians voluntarily left Jerusalem for fear of retaliation. News of the humane treatment of the Christians by Salahu-deen reached Europe and encouraged a great number to revisit the Holy Land. The Muslims received them warmly. Nevertheless, the first Crusade war was just the beginning. Seven other crusades and attacks on Muslims followed, but they were unsuccessful and did little to suppress Islam and Muslims in the East.

Christianity has always been a rival religion to Islam since its inception. Many Muslims believe that Christians, in one form or another, had and continue to wage wars against Islam and Muslims under different pretexts. The main idea behind the colonization and occupation of many Muslim and other African and Asian countries, they think, was to bring Jesus to Muslims so that they could be saved. Thus, the Empire (the imperial West) and the Church collaborated in subjugating other countries by force. Neither had been totally divorced from one another as people are oriented to believe. It is pertinent to point out here that despite the good relationship among Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Spain under Muslim rule for 700 years, when the Christians became the leaders (Ferdinand and Isabella for instance), they mercilessly killed Muslims in 1492 and forced them to convert to Christianity or face death. They expelled the Jews too.

The takeover of Spain was followed by intense efforts at conversion, accompanied by translation of the Christian scripture and liturgy into Arabic. Soon baptisms were no longer optional but forced, and by the turn of the fifteenth century, not only in Granada but throughout Castile, Muslims had to choose between conversion, emigration, or death. Because the emigrants had to leave their children behind, most chose to stay and "convert." Of course, many continued to practice their Islamic faith in secret (thereby becoming known as Moriscos), remaining for generations to come an un-persuaded, unassimilated, and unaccepted segment of Spanish society.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷ Jane Smith in "Islam and Christendom," in *The History of the Islamic World*, edited by John Esposito, p. 344.

Neither Jews nor Christians reciprocate the kind treatment they received under Muslim rule. Muslims wonder why the government of the State of Israel today treats and inflicts so much harm on Palestinians since its occupation in 1948 despite the fact that the Jews received and enjoyed cordial treatment and protection from Muslims in Turkey, Spain and Baghdad.

Jihad Against the European Colonial Regimes in the Muslim World

The occupation of Muslim lands by European colonial powers was a main turning point in Muslim history. The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims (whose majority was Christian) had been strained since the medieval age. The rivalry between Muslims and Christians continued until the beginning of the 19th century when most Muslim countries were occupied by Europeans. Asia, Africa, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines all fell by foreign invasion and occupation. Nearly all countries in Africa except Ethiopia were divided into pieces at the Berlin Conference in Germany in 1894; they were subsequently occupied by European military forces. Also, all Arabian countries were occupied and ruled by Christian invaders. With these occupations, Islamic countries became weak and Muslims were confused as what to do to regain their freedom from foreign occupation, which had no interest whatsoever in developing the occupied territories. On the surface, it appears as if the colonial invaders were developing the countries they occupied but in reality, they were not. The main objectives of colonial rule were exploitation of the resources of the occupied countries for the benefit of their own countries' purses and the introduction of Christianity. For instance, they built roads and rail lines not because they wanted the indigenous people to move from one place to another but to transport goods to the nearest seaports to be transferred to foreign countries. They built schools for learning foreign languages whereas the indigenous languages were not taught and occasionally students who spoke native languages at schools were penalized and punished. Local lands were confiscated, taken by force from their owners and put under the control of the foreign occupiers. Eventually, the natives, who were the original landlords, became laborers

who worked on their own land and paid heavy taxes to the occupiers. The most drastic effect of colonial policies on the indigenous people was disrespect for local laws and cultures. The colonial regimes changed the way the people lived, disregarded their customs, undermined their moral values and substituted them with European values, which were totally alien to the indigenous people. Above all, native religions were labeled as superstitious and never recognized as valid religions. All attempts were made to supplant them with Christianity. The various attempts by Muslims in different countries to free themselves from colonial rule were termed as *Jihad*. To Muslims, this is an attempt to free themselves from foreign occupation. This same effort from non-Muslims has been termed a "War of Liberation," as in South Africa. Colonial rulers always considered such attempt a revolt and crushed and killed the participants, whom they called rebels. The indigenous people perceived themselves as freedom fighters and were ready to die for their lands and noble countries. Europeans and Americans in the last few decades have claimed that they are bringing civilization to an uncivilized people. As pointed out before, the root of colonization against Muslims and their countries began a long time ago in 1492 C. E, when Spanish Catholic leaders conquered Muslim Spain, and killed and expelled Muslims. It is observed that towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the expansion of Western industrial and imperial capitalism, most Muslim countries remained under European colonial rule. Political religious movements under the banner of *Jihad* organized local resistance to colonial rule. Some of these religious movements against the colonial rule were:

- a) Muslim resistance against British colonialism in India which was led by Sayyid Ahmed Barelwi (1786-1831),
- b) Algerian revolt against French colonialism led by Abdoul Qadir (1808-1883);
- c) the Mahdi Movement in Sudan against Egyptian-Turkish-British colonialism led by Muhammad Ahmed al-Mahdi (1885 d.),
- d) Egyptian resistance against British colonialism led by Ahmad Urabi,

e) Sanusiyyah resistance against Italian Colonialism in Libya; and

f) Ahmad Bamba revolt against French Colonialism in Senegambia in West Africa.⁴⁸⁸

Toward the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, Muslims in different parts of the world began to revolt against European rule: in India, Arabia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. World War I proved to the conquered countries in Africa, India, and Arabia that colonial rulers were not as all-powerful as they pretended to be. They did not have answers to all human issues as they projected themselves to have possessed.⁴⁸⁹ They fought each other and recruited colonial troops to fill their ranks. In the early 1950s, the Arab world revolted against French and British rules. Egypt won her independence in 1952 and Sudan in 1956. The Algerians and Tunisians fought vigorously to win their countries back and to establish their own culture in 1963. Europeans mercilessly killed millions of Muslims in Sudan, India, Egypt, and Algeria during their struggles for independence.

On the other hand, the French and British colonized many countries in Africa. French colonization aimed at total cultural assimilation whereby the indigenous were forced to speak the French language and adopt French social and cultural attitudes. At the same time, the peoples of these countries were not exposed to modern sciences and technology. French and Dutch colonial administrators ruled their subjects with an iron hand, robbed the locals of their cultural identities and fought them relentlessly. It should be pointed out that Muslims in West Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and the Arab world used Islam to garner support for their revolts against the colonials. Some of these freedom fighters actually called themselves the *Mujahideen*, the army of God and wrongly or rightly perceived the Europeans as Christian fanatics who were spreading Christianity under false pretext. It might be fair to point out that most colonial governments were not so interested in religion *per se*; yet they used religion for their own mainly economic interests. They gave unlimited support to Christians missionaries, and helped them to establish schools and other educational institutions so

488 Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*, (NY: Mouton Publishers, 1979), pp. 39-41.

489 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

as to produce workers and laborers. They were protected by armed forces of the government; they had access to the possession of lands in many countries because the conquered land was considered the Queen's land. They did not promote Muslim educational institutions. Oftentimes, Muslim leaders were forced to ally with colonial rulers in their territory. Muslims controlled by France were forced to ally with France; Muslims controlled by the Dutch were forced to ally with the Dutch; and Muslims controlled by the British were forced to ally with the British. Hence divisions arose along ethnic groups and tribal lines. They found that they were fighting each other on behalf of the British, French, Dutch or Germans. The Egyptian army under British control in Egypt was taken to Sudan in 1898 to kill the Muslims and indigenous African people of Sudan. In World Wars I and II, Britain, Germany, France, and Belgium recruited African Muslims and non-Muslims to fight on their behalf in a war about which those innocent Africans had no real knowledge. European colonialism, after its exploitation, left the Muslim people dependent, needy, with European systems of governance in place which they knew did not have their best interests at heart. Perhaps the coming of colonial rulers to the Muslim world with the Sword in one hand and Cross on the other as asserted by Basil in his film *The Africans* provoked not only strong resistance on the part of the indigenous Muslims and local people, but inspired Muslims to intensify Islamic proselytizing among the people. Eventually, Islam emerged as a rallying ideology which, along with patriotism, served as a force against colonialism and the imposed Christianity. The struggles which Muslim Indians exerted to gain their independence in the 1860s and win their independent state in 1947 were motivated by *Jihad*, which is understood as an effort to defend oneself, one's community or country against perceived injustice and oppression, whether it be internal or external. As Muslims all over the world began to gain independence in the 1950s and 60s, they started closely cooperating to bring about greater unity among themselves.

By the time the Muslim countries gained their independence, the European Christian colonizers had sown the seeds of secularism in the Muslim world. Secularism is the separation of State and Church. That is, it is the ideology of rendering to God what belongs to God and rendering unto Caesar (King) what belongs to Caesar. In other words, religious

practices are separated from administrative practices. Secularism is the idea that the government should not endorse any particular religion as the religion of the State, and that people should be free to confess and subscribe to any faith they want. When colonizers proclaimed this ideology of secularism, they fervently support and promote Christianity and its missionaries in all Muslim countries and protect them. Yet, they did all they could to suppress other religions through repressive rules and regulations as well as deliberate destruction of other religious moral values. This grave hypocrisy allowed Muslims leaders to recognize that colonial rulers were not sincere in their approach to secularism and that one of their major objectives was to promote Christianity and facilitate mission work in Muslim countries. Hence, the education of local people was entrusted to foreign missionaries and their schools, which were tools of the government in disguise. More than often, native languages were not taught, and even when they were allowed to be taught, they were limited to the mere ability to read and write, but never taught to be the language of research or science. Practically speaking, the Europeans seriously undermined the credibility of native languages.

Before colonial rulers finally left, they appointed secular minded people into key positions of the government who actually carried out grandiose policies that did not serve the interests of their own people. Unfortunately, these new leaders believed that carrying out colonial plans would benefit their countries. It did not take long before they recognized the failure of those policies and plans. In search of new ideologies, many Muslim leaders turned to socialism and communism and never thought of looking to their own heritages to find amicable concrete solutions to their problems. Also, they did not turn to religion because they had been brainwashed to believe that they would find no solutions in religion, especially in Islam, which they considered an uncompromised religion despite the European heavy borrowing from Muslim scientists during the golden age of Islam in Spain and Baghdad. Muslims in the 20th century turned to Europeans searching for solutions for their predicament; they found none.⁴⁹⁰ They turned

490 For instance, the Arab Muslims have relied on the Europeans and Americans to help them find solutions to the conflict between them and Israel. But after sixty years of occupation, they (Arabs) recognize that the Americans and Europeans have no interest in solving the conflict and that Western support for Arabs

to the East, and Russia; they were woefully disappointed. Neither the Europeans nor Russians were ready to assist the Muslims. Indeed, social and political conditions in Europe and Russia are fraught with conflicting ideologies and moral bankruptcy even though they are technologically advanced. Dissidents of colonial rule argue that foreign legal systems do not fit within the moral order of Islam. They claimed that Western laws tolerate high levels of inequality and are rampant with racial, ethnic, and economic discrimination. Hence they asked for the substitution of those foreign laws with Islamic laws, which fit and correlate with their beliefs and ways of life.

After independence, the social and political situations in the Muslim world became unstable and military coups followed one another. Most leaders in the Muslim world are dictators enthroned by European powers; they exercise unlimited power over their subjects. It is this stressful condition that has bred Islamic fundamentalist ideologies whose proponents cry out that the solutions to the Muslim problems can only be found within Islamic heritage and civilization. Muslim problems cannot be solved by turning to the West or to the East. This awareness and disappointment led to the emergence of Muslim fundamentalism in all corners of the Muslim world, from Pakistan to Malaysia, from Algeria to Indonesia, from Saudi Arabia to Nigeria. But who are the Muslim fundamentalists?

The Muslim Fundamentalists

Most Islamic movements were founded before Muslim countries achieved their independence. Actually, those movements were instrumental in fighting and putting an end to colonial occupation. After independence, they worked hard to convince their people for the need to return to and find solutions for their problems within Islam. The political and military leaders of the Muslim world paid little attention to this call because most of them had received Western educations and strongly claimed that the advocacy of religion in the public domain is a return to a medieval way of life. Their argument

was not genuine. They must find a solution somewhere else for America will always give support and financial aids to Israel regardless of which party is in power in the U.S. Both Israel and the U.S know this and they recognize their partnership.

is that Western society progresses intellectually, politically, socially, and economically by limiting the role of religion in public life. And if Muslim communities are to progress and attain prosperity, they should follow the Western model. Of course, the serious tragic events of the 1940s, World War II and beyond, showed that Westerners are not at peace with themselves nor as stable as they project to the world. The primary goal of Muslim reformers was to return to the basics of Islam and find within Islam the solution for Muslim's predicaments because Western and Eastern ideologies had woefully failed them. Muslims in the past, argue reformers, succeeded and prospered by adhering to the tenets of Islam. They became leaders of the world in the medieval age by adhering to Islamic cultures, laws and values and by promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims. Some modern Muslim scholars wonder why the West objects to Muslims when they search for reform and freedom within their own religious tradition despite the fact that all major reform movements in human history that have brought profound cultural change have been religious. Indeed, the modern secularist West owes its reform to the religious Reformation of 16th and 17th centuries, as pointed out by Max Weber in his work *Protestant Ethics*.

There are many Muslim movements all over the world that the West labels as fundamentalist. It is ironic that whenever any Muslim movement emerges and calls Muslims to be more committed to their beliefs it is labeled fundamentalist even when it has nothing to do with politics or government. There are three major Islamic movements in the Muslim world that have had great impact on Muslims in the 20th century. These are the Wahabi movement in Najd and Hijaz (today's Saudi Arabia), the Jama'at al-Islamiyyah in Pakistan and the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. Of these three movements, the most influential in the Arab world as well as in all Muslim countries is the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. Therefore, we will focus on that movement because its ideology has the most widespread effect in the opinion of many. Of course, the Wahabbi movement also has had a great impact on the Muslim world, especially towards the end of 20th century, but it is extremely conservative and many modern intellectual do not subscribe to Wahabbi's ideology at all.

The Muslim Brothers (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*)

The Muslim Brothers (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*) was founded by Hasan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. Al-Banna received both traditional Islamic education and training in modern teaching at *Dar al-Ulum* at *Ismailiyyah* in Egypt. Since his youth, he recognized that Muslims in Egypt did not adhere to the teachings of Islam as expected. He attributed such laxity to the ignorance of the masses about Islam's pristine message and the ways that Islam was presented to the people. He founded the Muslim Brothers movement in 1928 and embarked on a vigorous education of the masses and how they should be proud of being Muslims. Gradually, his followers grew in number. He wrote pamphlets to recruit members and on how to educate them. Al-Banna was known to be a very organized person who planned ahead. He said he had a vision for Muslims and expressed his goals as follows:

- 1) The molding of an individual Muslim who knows his religion and commits to it by being responsible. A responsible Muslim, insists al-Banna, "is one who is physically and mentally strong, both in character and conduct, whose thinking is mature and organized, a Muslim whose beliefs in God is unshakable, who is capable of earning his livelihood through a lawful means, who appreciates the value of time, who is beneficial to himself and to others to the best possible extent."⁴⁹¹
- 2) Establishing a Muslim family which cherishes Islam and provides a healthy Islamic environment at home for all members of the family and adopts the Islamic ways of life. Creating an Islamic community whereby everyone in the community respects Islam and adheres to its tenets and recognizes it as a total way of life. Establishing an Islamic state which will apply Islamic laws (*Shari'ah*) as the law of the state, protect Muslim lands from any foreign occupation. Al-Banna was of the view that an Islamic state would never come into existence without the individuals in it being reformed and reoriented, and the family made the basis of Islamic values. Al-Banna explicated these goals and drew a blueprint of how they could be achieved. Basically, Al-Banna insisted that Islam offered Muslims the tools

they need to succeed in this life and the next, and these tools and guidance are in their religious texts: the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. He strictly advocated a return to the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, the life history of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. This was what Western scholars termed "fundamentalism." To Al-Banna, this is a return to the very basics of Islam. That is, in order for Muslims to prosper, they should rely on their own Islamic heritage, traditions and values and not on alien ideologies, which are foreign to their cultures and their ways of life. He assured his followers that the only solution to Muslim backwardness was to re-educate people about Islam so that they can understand its precepts and apply its rules. Al-Banna argued,

The opponents of Islam can deceive Muslim intellectuals and draw a thick veil over the eyes of the zealous by depicting Islam as being defective in various aspects of doctrine, ritual observance, and morality.... What helps them to carry out this deception is the Muslims' ignorance of the true meaning of their religions...; even if the ideology and teachings of Islam have gone astray (in the past), it is powerful in its essential nature, abundantly fertile and vital, attractive and enchanting in its splendor and beauty, and it will remain so because it is the truth. Human existence will never achieve perfection and virtue through any other means.⁴⁹²

Al-Banna strongly believed that there is no separation between religion and politics. Islam, he argued, permeates all aspects of life. As such, Islam should be the foundation of Muslim's daily affairs.

Al-Banna spent all his life training his disciples, writing books for them and giving lectures to guide them until he was assassinated in 1949 by agents of the Egyptian government. However, his legacy lives on until today especially among educated Muslims throughout the Muslim world. His followers carry on his message with minor modifications and reinterpretations. Some Muslim governments in the Arab world like Egypt and Syria have suspected the Muslim Brothers

491 Hasan al-Banna, *Da'watunna fi' Tawrin Jadid (Our Message in a New Form)* (Cairo: Dar al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr al-Islamiyyah, n.d.), p. 25.

492 Charles Wendell, trans. *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna* (California: University of California Press, 1978), p. 30.

of attempting to overthrow their governments. Many members were persecuted and jailed; some were even unjustly executed or brutally treated in prison. Nevertheless, the Muslim Brothers movement lives on under different names. They continuously contribute to the development of their communities both in Egypt and all other Arab countries where they are active. They establish schools, libraries, and vocational schools for technical training. They also actively participate in their country's social affairs, such as running for political positions. They vote in large numbers and are elected. Nowadays many of their members form coalitions with other political parties to win some seats in parliament. They are frequently banned politically in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq.

It is the insistence and claim of al-Banna that Muslims should look within Islam and find Islamic solutions to their problems that angers many Western writers. Hence, they label the Muslim Brothers as a fundamentalist or fanatic group that shows no readiness to compromise its principles. The Muslim Brothers consider themselves true followers of Islam and fundamentalist in the sense of going back to and practicing the basics of Islam, whose spirit, as al-Banna asserted, is very accommodative, inclusive in nature and adaptable to modern life. The ideology of the Muslim Brothers of infusing Islam into all aspects of Muslim daily life received a warm reception by Muslims in many countries. Leaders of some Muslim countries consider such inclusive nature of Islam and its involvement in politics a threat to their governments. Thus, they are very suspicious of the Muslim Brothers in anything it does and often persecute its members unnecessarily, curbing its activities and the spread of its ideology. Nevertheless, the Muslim Brothers continues to grow and spread in one form or another. It is said that *Jama'at Takfir Wal-Hilrah* (the group who calls all Muslims who do not implement Islamic laws unbelievers) sprang out of the Muslim Brothers. Some of them are very radical in their approach to and understanding of Islam in that they consider the establishment of an Islamic state a duty which every Muslim must strive to achieve by all means. *Jama'at al-Takfir* perceives a Muslim who lives under non-Islamic government a non-believer (*Kafir*). From the 1960s to the end of the 1990s, Muslim Brothers in general were persecuted. The Egyptian government jailed their leaders, confiscated

their properties and outlawed their activities, socially and politically. At present, members of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan participate in the government under different names and in coalition with other political parties that the government recognizes.

Nonetheless, the Muslim Brothers continue with their social and educational programs. While it is an undeniable fact that a handful of members of Islamic movements engage in radical acts and fanaticism, the policies, agenda, and programs of the Muslim Brothers are not geared toward radicalism. The Muslim Brothers claim that their goal is to improve the quality of life for all Muslims, enhance a better understanding of Islam and promote a peaceful coexistence with all members of society and all humanity in general. Members of the Muslim Brothers claim that they want to live their lives according to the teachings of Islam without being hampered by any government.

Jihad in America

America is a safe haven for many Muslims all over the world. Muslims do not come to the U.S. to wage wars against Americans. *Jihad* in America refers to how Muslims live and practice Islam; how they spread their religion and how they coexist with other Americans. *Jihad* is the struggle of the Muslim to maintain his or her identity as Muslim. *Jihad* has been mistakenly understood by some Americans as fighting or killing others until they embrace Islam. Even though African American Muslims under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad used Islam as an ideology of freedom from the oppression and abuses inflicted on them by the U.S. government and slave masters, the Nation of Islam never claims its struggle is a *Jihad* against Americans. Members of the NOI have never taken up weapons or marched to the capital to impose Islam on non-Muslim Americans. Their attempts have been the seeking of freedom, justice, and fair treatment for all African Americans and for all oppressed peoples of color, as envisaged by Malcolm X in 1964, whether they are Muslims or not.

As pointed out earlier in this work, Islam came to America when Muslim slaves were brought from West Africa. These Muslims never ceased to practice their beliefs in one form or another. Their insistence upon practicing and removing any obstacle that would prevent them

from applying and adhering to their religious beliefs was considered a *Jihad*: struggling to fulfill one's duties toward one's religion. In order to fulfill these duties, which are both religious and social, Muslim Americans strive to assert and affirm who they are as human beings who deserve the right to exist and enjoy all the rights that Americans enjoy. For instance, Muslim inmates in the 1940s and 50s had to go to court to prove that Islam is a legitimate religion, a system of beliefs to which people can subscribe. After African Americans won recognition from the government, they established their own schools to educate their children about Islam. Gradually, they opened their own stores, established their own small businesses and began to provide jobs for themselves. These are considered forms of *Jihad*: they work to provide educations and secure jobs for their members.

In addition, American Muslims tirelessly engage others in Islamic discourse. They educate and provide information about Islam and persuade others to join them. Various methods are employed to fulfill this duty of propagating Islam. Since there are many sects of Islam in America, each sect establishes different organizations that engage in proselytizing Islam. Some groups call others by word of mouth, some send published materials to interested people, while a few others use the media to reach a wider population. All these forms of invitations to Islam are American *Jihad*: a call to spreading and practicing Islam. They do not involve any violence.

Muslim Americans do not think of *Jihad* as fighting non-Muslims or forcing Islamic norms on them. While they choose Islam as their religion, they strongly believe that others have the right to embrace whatever religion they want. The American Constitution guarantees religious freedom to all Americans. Muslim leaders in America have expressed on different occasions that Islam is a peaceful religion and that Muslims can and should live peacefully with their non-Muslim neighbors. They emphasize that *Jihad* in America is: *Jihad* of the tongue by speaking about their faith; *Jihad* of the hand by expressing their faith in good works; and *Jihad* by the heart by making their faith a force for change internally from bad and evil to good deeds and to ethical values. However, like other Americans, they have the right to defend themselves, their families and their country when necessary.

The Terrorist Attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001

The September 11th attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) was a turning point in the history of the United States. It was a blow to the country's acclaimed supreme untouchable power. Before the incident, the U.S. had prided itself as being the world's greatest superpower. It showed how vulnerable our country is to foreign attack, especially by organized terrorist groups. The way the government responded to it was very decisive. The Al-Qaidah terrorist movement, believed to be led by Osama bin Laden was the main suspect. The Al-Qaidah movement perceives the U.S. as an evil empire that promotes injustice, spreads malfeasance, and imposes its interests upon Third World countries, especially on Muslims in Saudi Arabia, where the most sacred houses of God in Islam are located. Osama bin Laden opposed the presence of American troops on Arabian soil since 1990s gulf war. The troops, he argued, were undermining Islam and spreading vice in Saudi Arabia, a non-democratic government sustained and protected by the U.S. government. He appealed to Saudis to release the Americans and get them to leave Saudi soil. Saudi leaders did not heed his call; eventually he and his group attacked the U.S. base there in 1997 and killed 17 people. Osama was also believed to be behind the attack on the USS Cole in Yemen, where many people were killed and great damage was inflicted upon the ship and on the American Embassy in Kenya. Unfortunately, Bin Laden was very knowledgeable about U.S. vulnerabilities; he had been used by the Saudis and the U.S. government to fight Russia in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

September 11th was not the first attack on the U.S. interests. Several attacks had been carried out before. The Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) was aware of the September 11 plot but underestimated its scale until it was actually carried out on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. The events shocked the entire world, for it was a direct attack on the most important symbols of power of the U.S., the World Trade Center in New York City and the White House in Washington D.C. Nearly 3,000 people from 91 nationalities were killed. They included all kinds of people: male and female, young and old, leaders, bankers, administrators, workers, security men, janitors, doctors, police officers, firemen, traders, travelers, pilots, and people from all spheres of life. The

innocent victims of September 11th came from all corners of the United States and from all parts of the world. The attack has left an everlasting tremor in the hearts of Americans who recognized for the first time in modern history that they are indeed vulnerable to foreign attack. Yet, they wonder why others harbor so much hate against Americans to the extent that they would kill many innocent people to express their anger. U.S. leaders stated that the perpetrators did what they did because of their dislike for democracy and freedom, which Americans famously enjoy and try to promote. Nothing is further from the truth than this simplistic notion. Muslims neither hate Americans nor reject democracy. Muslim Americans embrace democracy and cherish the freedoms they have and enjoy in America. Muslim Americans consider America their homes.

The U.S. Government's Response to the September 11 Attack

For the first time in modern American history, the government closed all airports and seaports after the attack. The Wall-Street Stock Market Exchange was closed, as well as all schools and universities. The government and U.S. citizens immediately and courageously tried to assist and rescue the victims. Unfortunately, some of the rescue teams were themselves stranded and killed in the abundant rubble and confusion at Ground Zero, as the site was called. The outpouring of assistance and support to victims and their families from people all over the country was enormous. It took a long time and millions of dollars before the debris from Ground Zero was finally removed. While the clean-up was underway, the government compiled information about the causes of the attack. In October 2001, the government concluded that the attackers were masterminded and instigated by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which was supported financially by Al-Qaida through the leadership of Osama bin Laden, the Saudi millionaire. The government waged an intensive war on Afghanistan, destroying Al-Qaidah's bases and installed a new government in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Many members of Al-Qaida were brutally killed, and thousands of them were jailed both in Afghanistan and in Guantanamo camp in Cuba. In the U.S., thousand of suspected members of Al-

Qaida were rounded up and jailed; this sadly included many innocent Muslims who had no connection to Al-Qaida.⁴⁹³ Unfortunately, until the date of this writing, there is no evidence that Osama bin Laden has yet been killed or captured.

However, the U.S. government did manage to destroy the infrastructure and financial foundation of Al-Qaida throughout the world. It also closed down and confiscated organizations and movements with links to it, or which had in some way rendered support to Al-Qaida. The government continues to investigate and locate members of Al-Qaida around the world and bring them to justice. Those who are suspected of rendering financial or technical assistance to Al-Qaida are also punished. The government quickly moved to confiscate their property and label them terrorists.

Ironically, the U.S. government and many of its citizens have failed to ask an important question, which is why do people harbor such levels of anger, hatred and frustration against the United States? After the Sept. 11 incident, the U.S. government gave the most simplistic and least convincing answer by saying that the attackers and their collaborators attacked the U.S. because of their hate for democracy and freedom, which Americans enjoy. It deliberately ignored the unfair foreign policies of the U.S. against Arabs, Muslims, and Third World countries. The government's approach to the situation evidences again that it sees things from a capitalist point of view whereby everything is seen from a material perspective. The capitalist mentality entails providing temporary solutions to urgent problems and issues so as to generate money at any cost. Hence, if a house is infected with cockroaches or termites, instead of finding the cause of the problem, a capitalist will develop anti-roach sprays or establish a pest exterminator company, which will generate a stream of money. Thus, the roaches will be temporarily contained but will not be totally eliminated for the fear that if they are permanently eliminated, the spray-companies would close down and employees would lose their jobs.⁴⁹⁴

493 The government arrested many of them on visa violations, and because they were Muslims, they received harsh treatment from the INS, which detained many of them and deported others.

494 It is on this premise that President G.W. Bush insists that the U.S. must go to war against Iraq so as to boost the U.S. economy. The death of many innocent people in Iraq meant little to him and his administration as long as America

With regard to the September 11, 2001, attack, John Paul Lederach states in his article titled *The Challenge of Terror: A Traveling Essay* that:

I will say again and again, our response to the immediate events has everything to do with whether we reinforce and provide the soil, seeds, and nutrients for future cycles of revenge and violence, or whether it changes. We should be careful to pursue one and only one thing as the strategic guidepost of our response. Avoid doing what they expect. What they (the attackers) expect from us is the lashing out of the giant against the weak, the many against the few. This will reinforce their capacity to perpetrate the myth they carefully seek to sustain, that they are under threat, fighting an irrational and mad system that has never taken them seriously and wish to destroy them and their people. What we need to destroy is their myth not their people.⁴⁹⁵

Subsequent events showed that U.S. officials did not heed Lederach's words. Rather, the government went to Afghanistan and killed suspected Al-Qaida members, as well as many innocent people and children. Many Afghans were captured, persecuted, and tortured while others were jailed indefinitely. The question that has not been answered is: Will this retaliatory attack stop or prevent future attacks on U.S. citizens and protect our interests abroad? Again, there is no simple answer. But enacting revenge will not stop future attacks on the part of terrorists, for they will wait patiently for the opportune time to strike again as long as they feel their grievances have not been justly and adequately addressed. Terrorists intend to create fear in the hearts of Americans and have won that battle. Because of this fear, the U.S. government has enacted the Patriot Acts I & II, which infringe upon the freedom of many innocent American people. Arab-Americans, Indo-Pakistani-American Muslims, and in fact all Muslims become the subject of suspicion, especially if he or she dresses like an Arab

wins the war and controls the oil in Iraq. Bush insists on fighting in Iraq so as to promote the U.S. democracy and freedom and peace through war.

⁴⁹⁵ From www.writersunion.org reprinted article by J. Paul Lederach on October 6, 2001, accessed on November 29, 2002.

or wears the headscarf. Muslims are openly discriminated against in public venues, especially at airports. Anyone who looks like a Muslim is suspected of having evil intentions.

The U.S. government, through the INS (now Homeland Security) enacted laws to routinely fingerprint people who come from the Arab world and some other Muslim countries.⁴⁹⁶ These measures, which aim at containing terrorism against the U.S., are seen as oppressive by many American citizens who strongly object to them. However, the federal government in Washington D.C. continues to perpetrate its war on terrorism by labeling Muslim countries as terrorist states. The Bush administration planned to fight all of them for either harboring or somehow supporting terrorists. It chose to begin war with Iraq for its alleged development of weapons of mass destruction, which the U.S. reasoned may have fallen into the hands of terrorists who may use them against the U.S. and its interests in the Middle East. But in reality, Iraq and the other Arab countries, including Iran, pose no threat whatsoever to the U.S. The administration intended to seize and exploit the oil resources in Iraq and further protect the state of Israel next door. All other reasons given to justify war against Iraq are to this day unsubstantiated. Evidence has shown that Iraq possesses no weapon of mass destruction (WMD). The main purpose of waging war against Iraq might be to control Iraqi oil, manage the Arabs and to spread democracy and freedom as defined by the U.S. government. It strongly supports both Saudi and Egyptian governments, which are not democratic. The Saudi government is a monarchy and Egypt is a police state ruled by an old military leader, a dictator who made himself president in 1981. The leaders of both countries remain in office due to the support and protection given to them by the U.S.

The Muslim Response to September 11

Every Muslim in the U.S. was affected by the events of September 11, whether directly or indirectly. In the first week following the attacks, Muslim leaders, organizations, mosques, Islamic centers and other groups, along with families and individuals in the U.S., expressed

⁴⁹⁶ Twenty Muslim countries are required to register with INS. During that process, hundreds were detained and deported to their countries under different circumstances for different violations which had nothing to do with security.

their sympathies with the victims and sent their condolences and offers of help to the families of the affected. All expressed their condemnation of the attacks and asserted that Islam as a religion did not endorse such atrocity and the killing of any innocent people in order to win political points. Nearly every Muslim organization in the country released a communiqué condemning this act of terrorism. Leading academic Muslim and non-Muslim organizations also expressed their sympathy to the victims and denounced the crime. Muslims all over the world from East to West, from Malaysia to Africa, offered their prayers for everyone who lost loved ones in the attack. Terrorist acts are against the tenets of Islam and contradict the teachings of all religions and human moral values. Terrorists are murderers, argues Hamzah Yusuf, one of the leading Muslim activists in the U.S.

Ironically, despite condemnation by Muslim leaders in America, Europe and all over the world, many Americans still feel that Muslims were silent and did not speak out loudly enough in public. Hence, they wrongly assume that many Muslims support the attacks - nothing is further from the truth. Actually, this is the first time in modern history where something tragic happened to a non-Muslim country and Muslim scholars around the world denounced the event, condemned the terrorists and declared that their acts of terrorism un-Islamic, even though the terrorists called it an act of *Jihad*. The expressions of condemnation immediately after the attack were strongly felt and very emotional. The media for its part kept showing video of the attack over and over to refresh the memories of Americans. However, on October 7, 2001, a month later, the government began bombing Afghanistan and the Taliban, and people's opinions began to change. While some supported the attack of Afghanistan, many in America opposed the bombing because it targeted the whole country. Eventually, many innocent Afghans were killed while thousands have been left homeless after American military soldiers destroyed their homes. Nevertheless, Muslims' responses in America can be categorized into five main areas: sympathizers, patrons, opportunists, neutralists, and observers.

Different Responses by Muslims to September 11, 2001

The event of September 11th shook American Muslims to the core; they were frightened to death when they heard the news, for they knew they would be suspected and eventually they were. How did Muslims respond?

1. Muslim responses took many forms. The first response was to express shock and sympathy for the families of the victims, and to caution the American government against taking any premature or irrational action without a thorough evaluation, assessment and investigation first.
2. The second response was denial that the attack was carried out by Muslims but was instead perpetrated by Jews. This was the view of a small minority who strongly felt that the attack was a conspiracy against innocent Muslims and Arabs.
3. The third response was a cry to punish the perpetrators and anyone that was involved in the attack. All participants should be brought to justice. This was the opinion of the majority of Muslims in the U.S. and the majority of Americans as well.
4. The fourth response was skeptical. These Muslims are not sure whether the attack was in fact committed by Muslims or not. Thus, they were and continue to be ambivalent about what should be done.
5. The fifth response was by African-American Muslims, which was neutral. They generally kept silent when the public was expecting them to speak out. Finally, their leaders publicly condemned the attack but said little about what should be done to the attackers. They failed to come to defense of the suspected Muslim immigrants.

The Sympathizers

The first group mentioned above changed its opinion within a few days as the American government immediately determined that the attackers were Arabs and Muslims, and that the government of Afghanistan (the Taliban), whom the American and Pakistani governments had trained and equipped with weapons of mass

destruction in the 1980s, was behind the attack. The U.S. government claimed that they had convincing evidence that the attack had been masterminded by Osama Bin Laden from Afghanistan and said that America would severely retaliate and bring the attackers to justice. All calls for caution and certainty that U.S. scholars and politicians put forward were ignored. Nevertheless, this group of Muslims issued press releases elaborating their views and expressing their sympathy for the families of the victims of September 11, and even donated money to them and physically helped the families of the victims in New York. Despite the efforts of this group, little attention was given to them by the American media because many newscasters thought that Muslim group's condemnation was not strong enough.

Radio stations and TV channels wanted to conduct separate interviews with Muslims. Media personnel were not satisfied with the responses they got and thought they could get more information from Muslims if they were a little more aggressive during their interviews. As expected, Muslim leaders continuously blamed the attackers, sought fair approaches to the problem and warned against irrational actions by the government. It is interesting to note that this group did not claim that Bin Laden masterminded the attacks. They concentrated on the attack itself rather than on the attackers. Of course, they insisted that those who perpetrated the acts had committed a violent crime against humanity regardless of their objectives; the attackers did not represent true Islam and Muslim populations. Muslim leaders declared that Islam is a religion of peace and those who attacked the WTC abused Islam because Islam does not teach the murder and killing of innocent people. On the other hand, this group called the attention of the American government and the public to the unfair policies it pursued in the Middle East.

The Patrons

The second response was that the attack was a conspiracy by Jews and the Israeli government. This group claimed that the attack could not have been carried out without the knowledge and support of Jewish secret agents. This group argues that the attack was well planned and carefully carried out and thus could not have been implemented by

the Taliban, who were known to be poorly organized and who had no control of modern technology. It also claimed that many Jews were not at work at the WTC when the attack took place. They claim many Jews were absent because they knew that something was going to happen that day. This group expressed sympathy to the families of the victims but insisted that Muslims should not be blamed for the attack, even though they might have carried it out. It claims that the attackers were used as scapegoats in order to blame everything on Muslims and Islam. This group, until present, denies the involvement of the Taliban in the attack and does not believe all the evidence presented by the American government. The video tapes shown on TV about the event were given different interpretations. Only a very few people share this strange opinion. However, subscribers do not claim that the attack was justified. They condemn it and argue that the State of Israel should be held responsible, and not the Taliban. The American government and American people never credited this position, paying it very little attention. The author does not share this opinion either.

The Opportunists

The third response was of shock and a cry for justice. Members of this group were astonished at the attacks and expressed their deep heartfelt sympathy for victims and their relatives. They organized meetings to rally financial support for the victims. At the same time, they insisted that the attackers and whoever aided them should be brought to justice by all means. Hence, they consented to the U.S. government's waging war against the Taliban. Many members in this group were convinced that Bin Laden and al-Qaida were responsible for the attack. They believed that the video shown later by the State Department was credible and therefore any military action against the Taliban was justified. The majority of those who subscribed to this idea were Muslim modernists, who have mostly been educated in the West but are not satisfied with traditional interpretations of Islam and feel that Islam must modernize. Members of this group organize meetings, lectures and seminars to educate the public and present Islam as a viable religion that condemns terrorism in all its forms. They even argue that all the confrontations and battles between Prophet Muhammad and

his tribes were defensive and therefore Islamic history is free from any terrorist acts. On that basis, the fight against terrorism and terrorists is legitimate, and all Muslim countries and leaders who support the U.S. government are acting responsibly. They should be commended for their positive stand and encouragement in the fight against terrorism.

The Neutralists

The fourth group represents the people who remain neutral. While they express that the attack was an evil act, they feel that it's not their main concern; they assert that the attackers were wrong but that Americans might have deserved what they received for their atrocities abroad. Whatever decision the American government makes is acceptable to them as long as it does not directly affect their jobs. These people are partially pro-American and partially pro-Islam. Even though many of these groups consider themselves Muslims, they are not perceived as practicing Muslims by orthodox Muslims. This group cherishes the American ways of life and it is only when members are oppressed or their interests or rights are deprived that they remember their "glorious" Islamic heritage and wish that Islam were followed in America. This group is a minority and cares less about what goes on in America or anywhere else for that matter. Their ultimate concern is to live a "normal" life in America, which to them is a safe haven.

The Observers

The last group is some members of the African-American Muslims. Generally, this group sides with the American government. They bitterly objected to the attack and insisted that those involved should be brought to justice and be punished. The majority of them strongly believe that Bin Laden and the Arabs launched the attacks. Some seemed to support the subsequent persecution of American immigrant Muslims, and expressed no real support for them. They felt that some Arabs have in the past discriminated against African Americans. The Arabs, they claim, showed little compassion and respect for African Americans and exhibit no awareness of what they went through and suffered under slavery. It is as if to say to immigrant Muslims, you chose to initially distance yourself from us, and now you expect us to

come to your rescue blindly? Thus, some African-American Muslims neither give full support to immigrant Muslims nor express their sympathy to the families of Arabs or Muslims who are taken into custody as suspects. Their leadership does not officially condemn racial profiling against Muslim Arabs, except Minister Louis Farrakhan in his February 19, 2002 speech on the Nation of Islam Savior day. Some were of the impression that African-American Muslims would escape this persecution; unfortunately, African-American Muslim women are also stereotyped and humiliated at airports and other public places too. They are subjected to interrogation at several large airports when they wear their veils, and are checked when their names appear to be Islamic.

Some African-American Muslims accuse immigrant Muslims of negligence towards them. And now that the Arabs are at the center of a big problem, they deliberately leave them alone to suffer as the Arabs tended to leave the African-Americans alone without coming to their rescue on occasions when they needed them most. However, there are a few reports that some have assisted Arabs since September 11. Generally, African-American Muslims do not consciously instigate the government to take action against Muslims as did some White and non-Muslim Americans. With fear being the tactic of the media, many non-Muslim Americans call the attention of the FBI, CIA or other government agents to their Arab and Muslim neighbors, with some eventually becoming suspects who are then detained and occasionally arrested for mainly immigration violations.

These are the responses from Muslims as this author perceived them. It must be stated that these opinions are not shared by all American Muslims.

The Aftermath of September 11

One of the consequences of September 11 is the reassessment of Muslims of themselves. Publicly or privately, many Muslims in America began to re-evaluate themselves and their educational programs and activities. Even the sermons given at many mosques are evaluated and critically modified so as to be moderate, accommodative and free of violent phraseology. They have become critics of themselves and have begun to think how they can relate to others in the U.S. and how Islam

can be applied and become more relevant to their environments and communities in America.

American Muslims have also made efforts to free themselves from the tutelage of the Arab world and of Saudi Arabia patronage, in particular. They are shocked that the majority of attackers came from Saudi Arabia. Thus, during Ramadan of 2001, the Fiqh Committee (the legal council of the Muslims in America) at ISNA headquarters in Indianapolis met and decided to follow their own sighting of the moon in America rather than following the sighting by Saudi Arabia. In the past, whenever the moon was sighted in Saudi Arabia, Muslim Americans would fast and also breakfast at the end of Ramadan with the Saudis. But in Ramadan 2001, ISNA declined to follow Saudi Arabia. About 70% of American Muslims accepted that policy and followed ISNA's lead. Perhaps it was a bold attempt to be truly independent of Saudi Arabia. Such a freedom from Saudis would not win any currency before the September 11. Muslims in America have turned inward to critically evaluate and assess themselves and take the necessary steps to address issues and challenges they face in their daily lives in America. This marks the beginning of a new era for Muslims in America.

September 11 brought the public's awareness to the fact that there are millions of Muslims in America. Before the attack, many Americans thought that Muslims in the country were small in number and that only foreigners are Muslims. The fact is that there are more Muslims in America than of many other religious groups, including Jews. The events also brought to mind the realization that Muslims are a closed community. They rarely reach out to others; they participate little, if any, in local and national politics. Their contribution and participation in local and state social functions and activities is also minimal. This has changed drastically since September 11.

Liberal Muslims seize the opportunity to voice their opinions against fundamentalists. Liberals interpret the *Qur'an* in their own ways. They point out the existence of diverse interpretations of the *Qur'an* and that no particular version should be given preference over others. Thus, they consider their voice a legitimate voice to be reckoned with. In addition, Muslims have noted greater interest in learning about Islam. Many books on Islam were sold out regardless of their quality before the end of December 2001. There are also a number of people

who reverted to Islam during this period; there are Muslims too who converted to Christianity claiming that they did not want to cherish Islam any more. This also led to a debate on the issue of apostasy in Islam. Muslim scholars shy away from mentioning a death penalty for apostasy, rather, they claim that since they are in the U.S., this law cannot be applied, and that in the Muslim world too, this law should be re-visited or suspended.

On the other hand, the September 11 attack gives ample chance for some Christian denominations, such as Baptists and other evangelists, to vent their hate and antagonism against Islam and Muslims. These denominations perceive Islam to be the only religion which rivals Christianity. They wonder why many African Americans are embracing Islam, which they see as a violent religion. After September 11, these groups wrote and continue to write terrible articles about Islam and Muslims, and consistently denigrate them. They push the government to seriously punish Muslim terrorists as if there are no terrorists among other religious groups. To them, Islam promotes violence. They even claim that Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, preached violence and encouraged killing of any non-Muslims, while Jesus was an ambassador of peace who came to save lives not to destroy them.

Alas, the September 11 attack shows just how vulnerable the security of the American government is despite its claims of having the highest levels and complete ability to defend its land and citizens. Muslim countries, many of which rely on America for protection, also began to reevaluate their reliance on America, which clearly was unable to defend itself against foreign attack despite its military arsenal and unparalleled means of communication technology.

Why Do They Hate Us?

After September 11 attack, many Americans asked why Muslims hate Americans. They think that the attack was the result of a deeply rooted hatred for Americans despite the fact that Americans help Muslims all over the world, particularly in Bosnia and Kosovo. Former President Bush himself asked the same question and alleged "they (Muslims and those terrorists) hate us because of our freedom and democracy." What a simplistic answer! Thus, he announced that his

war on terrorism was a crusade war. Perhaps when Bush actually spoke the word Crusade, it was not a slip of the tongue. He meant it even though he was immediately cautioned against using such a dangerous expression. He listed many countries as terrorist countries. He and his top advisors wanted to fight them all. Former Vice President Dick Cheney, said at one point that the U.S. was considering military or other actions against 40-50 countries and warned that the new war may last "50 years or more." Senator John McCain even asserted that he was ready to let U.S. army stay in Iraq for 100 years if need be.

From a Muslim perspective, Muslims do not hate Americans; however, they dislike the American government's policies in the Muslim world. If the American government were to extend an open invitation to Muslims around the world to come to America, a majority of them would not hesitate to come. In reality, all of them would like to come. They like the freedom of religion in America; they like to work and earn a living, and they are proud of being associates of Americans. Yet, they abhor American foreign policies with regard to Muslims, particularly in the Middle East. These policies have over the years bred and continue to breed widespread anti-Americanism, and so some see the carnage of September 11 as retribution. Muslims before the attack expressed openly and privately their disappointment with American policies, but the American government did not seem to care. As the African proverb goes, "a careless fly follows the corpse to the grave."

Some of the policies that breed anti-Americanism are:

- a) The American government's policy to promote democracy in America and in many other places in the world but prevents its occurrence in the Arab world by supporting military regimes and monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Bahrain. Any cry for democracy by the citizens is crushed and Muslim leaders and activists put in jail and tortured with American tools. That is, America takes away freedom from citizens of those countries by supporting anti-democratic regimes. Yet, despite all the evidence of widespread human right violations in some Arab countries and in Israel, the American government raises no objection in order to protect its interests there.

- b) The American government's unlimited financial support to Israel (nearly \$5 billion dollars annually) at the expense of the taxpayers. All the weapons of destruction used by the Israeli government against Arab Palestinians are made or imported from or supplied to them by the United States. At the same time, Palestinians are forbidden to carry guns and import any weapons to defend themselves. Yet, all the time, the American government believes that Israel has the right to defend itself. *The settlements have been built on Palestinian land with money from America.* Ironically, those who fight with stones and pebbles and whatever else is available to them are considered terrorists while the Israeli government, which uses F-15s, missiles, tanks, and helicopters to massively kill the Palestinians and destroy their homes, are perceived as oppressed, heroes and a symbol of democracy in the Middle East. The questions that Muslims ask are: Where is justice, fair treatment and equality? Why does the American government promote justice and fair play at home and fail to promote the same abroad? The major issue is that our policies contradict our own basic values: freedom of religion, speech, assembly and press. On the other hand, whenever United Nations resolutions favor Israel, the U.S. government always supports them; but when they favor Arabs the U.S. always opposes them and threatens to use its veto power. What a double standard!
- b) The American invasion of Iraq to destroy its reputed weapons of mass destruction. The invasion was carried out to protect Israel and to keep it the only superior military power in the Middle East. Billions of dollars have been spent for this invasion which has no justification whatsoever. Iraq did not pose any threat to the security of the U.S.
- c) The presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf war angered many Muslims because Saudi Arabia harbors the most sacred shrine in Islam. Muslims do not want to be policed at their sacred sites. Saudi citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with the American presence and have even gone to the extent of bombing U.S. bases in there.

Certainly, then, Muslims do not hate Americans as was portrayed by the U.S. previous administration. Rather they love the American

people and still want to come to the U.S. However, they dislike the unjust and unfair American policies in the Muslim world and believe very strongly that fighting terrorists by killing innocent people and bombing the infrastructure of the country will not promote peace or win the war. Instead it will exacerbate the problem, as pointed out by Graham Fuller.

Muslims don't hate us or our political values; they want to experience those values in their own lives. Unfortunately, our foreign policy has put democratization at the bottom of the priority list in favor of the more immediate needs for energy, unlimited support to Israel, and the false security of 'stability' via dictatorship.⁴⁹⁷

If retaliation solved problems, Israel would be a haven for Israelis; rather it is a war zone. Killing others never brings peace to anyone. And unless the U.S. government and the American public are ready to address defects in U.S. foreign policies, we will be unable to ameliorate the resentment Muslim Arabs have for Americans, or eliminate the terrorists. The future of America is fraught with danger without peace in the Middle East, and doomed to more terrible repetitions of September 11, for how can anyone think that the children of Afghanistan or Iraq will like the U.S. tomorrow when their innocent parents have been killed by Americans, and their lands are full of mines? We hope that the war against the Taliban is not a war or crusade against Muslims. We hope that the war in Iraq will stop as soon as possible so that the Iraqis can rebuild their country. With the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have put these countries backward for another 100 years. There is no way that Iraqi people can re-build their countries in the coming 100 years.

Summary

The word *Jihad* has been wrongly translated as "holy war" to mean the killing of all infidels wherever they are found. This notion of *Jihad* is a gross distortion of the truth. *Jihad* primarily means struggling

497 Graham E. Fuller, is the former Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council at the CIA.

and striving to attain a noble goal. It is the struggle to practice Islam and promote justice, peace, and defend one's life, wealth, honor, and human rights. It also implies the promotion of values and a defense of one's belief. A whistle-blower is making a *Jihad*; a Muslim who shares his or her faith with others is making *Jihad*. A Muslim lady who works hard to put food on the table for her kids is making *Jihad*. Every day, Muslims make *Jihad* and this has nothing to do with the killing of innocent people by extremists, who use religion for their own interests. Of course, Muslim jurists define *Jihad* in different ways. To them, *Jihad* includes the intimate struggle to purify the soul of evil influences, both subtle and overt, to cleanse one's soul of sins, and to defend one's country against any external enemy of Islam and Muslims. This legal definition is what many label "holy war." Muslims do not consider the defense of one's country as a holy war but as a fight against corruption, aggression and invasion.

Further, in this chapter we explained the meanings of *Jihad* in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. We analyzed how the caliphs, the successors of Muhammad, and the Muslim leaders understood *Jihad* and applied it during their reigns. We alluded to the fact that the Umayyad and Abbasid empires used the theory of *Jihad* to wage relentless wars against non-Muslims in order to expand their geographical territories and control the wealth therein. In the process, they annexed many lands and conquered many peoples. It was such conquering that many people thought of as the holy war. But to those conquering leaders, it was a *Jihad* to free Muslim lands from foreign invasion, oppression, and corruption.

Historically speaking, the holy war was actually waged by Christian leaders from Europe against the Muslims in Jerusalem in 1099 C. E. The Crusaders, as they were later known, mercilessly massacred thousands of Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem. Their success in Jerusalem instigated them to launch more crusade wars against Muslims but they were not as successful as they planned. However, in 1187 C. E, Salahu-deen (Saladin), a Kurdish warrior and governor of Egypt, sacked Jerusalem and freed it from the occupation of Christian crusaders. He pardoned the Christians who had been captured by the Muslim army and set them free. Salahu-deen allowed those who decided to stay in Jerusalem to practice their religion and did not retaliate from what the Christians

had done to them a century before. When the good news of the kind treatment of the Muslims for the Christians reached Europe, they flocked to Jerusalem, interacted with Muslims and took Islamic culture and arts back to European countries.

Nevertheless, the rivalry between Christianity and Islam never ceases. Thus, in the 19th century, Europeans launched aggressive wars against Muslims and eventually most of the Muslim world fell under their occupation, from India to Indonesia, and from North Africa to South Africa. The Arab world also fell under their occupation except for Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia in Africa. Colonial rulers enslaved the conquered people, exploited their resources, drained their manpower, took their land and confiscated their properties. Even though colonial rulers did not see their occupation as a "crusade," the Muslims perceived it as a crusade war against Islam and Muslims because it was during that occupation that European imperialists established Christianity in the Muslim world through missionaries, who were tools in the hands of imperialists.

Eventually, from the 1950s on, Muslims rose against Western imperialists and fought back in the name of their religion and nationalism until they won their independence from colonial rulers. Many Muslims regarded their fight against Europeans a defense of their land and religion. Thus it was perceived a *Jihad*. By the end of the 1970s, nearly all Muslim countries had won their independence. The struggle (*Jihad*) for independence bred the emergence of Muslim fundamentalists, who insisted that the only way for Muslims to regain their glory was to return to pristine Islam as practiced by the Prophet and his immediate disciples in the 7th century. Fundamentalism in Islam is a call to go back to the past because the new age, despite its advancements in science and technology, has brought no peace to humanity. Fundamentalists insist that only through the daily practice of Islam and the application of Islamic laws can Muslims regain their glory. Western ideologies like capitalism, socialism, and democracy as understood and designed by the West will not fully benefit Muslims because they are based on individual interests of a selected group in society. Fundamentalists give no credit to these Western ideas and thus do not want their fellow Muslims to accept them.

There are many fundamentalist groups in Islam, as in other religions. Yet, the media often focuses on the extreme Muslim groups like the Taliban and Hamas. The media use distorted terms and expressions to describe these groups such as "Muslim terrorists," whereas, they did not describe Timothy McVeigh as a "Christian terrorist" even though he killed 167 people in the Oklahoma bombing. The media vilifies the faith rather than the persons responsible for the wrong acts. By so doing, they deliver a distorted message that Islam is a violent religion and deliberately fail to show the diversity within Muslim societies. They group all Muslims together and think every Muslim represents all other Muslims. On the other hand, even though the extreme groups are Muslim, they do not represent true Islam because they practice what Islam totally condemns such as killing of innocent people and harming others like the attack on the WTC in New York on September 11, 2001. The event shocked the world and put Muslims in a precarious position. Every Muslim was suspected of evil acts. Eventually, thousands were detained, interrogated, jailed for an unspecific time, and some deported. The government responded to September 11 by waging relentless war against the Taliban in Afghanistan and anyone who is suspected of supporting the terrorists. The government also confiscated the properties of suspected terrorists in the U.S.

American Muslims responded to the September 11 events in different ways. All the groups discussed in this chapter condemned the attack and sent their sympathies to the families of the victims. However, the majority of them did support the attack on Afghanistan but objected to the racial profiling of American Muslims, especially the immigrants. They objected to the Patriot Act I and II which gives law enforcement agents and the government in general, especially the Homeland Security, the unlimited power to detain, interrogate, deport, and persecute any suspect without him/her having access to a lawyer. Such drastic measures on the part of the government rob American citizens of their civil liberties, regardless of their faiths. Various attempts from civil liberty advocates to review or amend the Patriot Act have not yielded any fruitful result. The majority of Muslims who were detained after September 11 did not know what they were being charged with, and some of them have no means of reaching their families. Others are detained for immigration violations and even traffic violations.

Generally, Muslim Americans have been subjected to tremendous hardship and mal-treatment by the U.S. government at home and abroad. Yet, Muslims do not hate America but resent America's foreign policies, which often have a negative impact on the Muslim world. The American government needs to change those foreign policies that indict all Muslims and accuse them of terrorism before they are proven guilty. If this unfair indictment continues, anti-American sentiment will continue to exist and even rise, and there will hardly be peace in the world. This author believes that the invasion of "rug" states and the killing and assassination of dictators and tyrant leaders in the Arab world who were actually supported by the U.S in the past cannot bring peace either. Rather, it will breed more resentment against the American government. Many Muslims in the U.S. believe that many Arab leaders are supported by the U.S. despite the fact that they are not democratic governments; they are dictators who serve American interests in whatever ways that the American government wants. And when their usefulness expires, these leaders will be discarded, as happened to the Shah of Iran in 1979, Jafar Numeiri of Sudan in 1985, and Saddam Hussein in March 2003. This author believes very strongly that invasion and occupation of other countries under the pretext of spreading democracy cannot bring peace to the Middle East. Without peace in the Middle East there will be no peace in the Muslim world, and eventually there will be no peace anywhere. War, invasion and destruction of other countries under any pretext will not bring peace to the world. Peace comes through love, compassion and respect for others. It is time to develop mutual understanding among ourselves and embrace our diversity. There are no others; we're all human beings living under this small planet. We should live together peacefully as brothers and sisters in humanity.

Suggested Readings

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Conclusion

Islam is the willingness and readiness of a person to totally submit to God. A Muslim is one who believes and practices Islam. Islam is the second largest religion in the world and in the family of Abrahamic monotheistic faiths. Muslims believe that Islam is a religion of peace and a way of life. It unites its adherents through a common faith and language. Islam emerged in Mecca (current Saudi Arabia) in the early 7th century and spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula within a few decades. It united Arabs who had never had a centralized government into a well-organized community under one banner. Hence, they became leaders of the world and made their mark on human history.

The prophet of Islam was Muhammad, the son of Abdullah. He was born and raised in Mecca around 570 C. E. He was well-loved among his people, the Quraysh. At age forty, he received a divine message from God and thus invited his people to believe in Islam. Only a few people accepted his message while the majority rejected him for fear of losing their status, economic power and authority over the Arabs who considered the Quraysh as leaders. Eventually, bitter tension grew between Muhammad and the Quraysh, which led to the exile of Muhammad's followers to Abyssinia in 615-6 C. E. Muhammad himself was forced into exile to Medina in 622 C. E. The people of Medina gave him a warm reception and appointed him as their leader and an arbitrator between them and the warring Bedouins. Within a short time in Medina, Muhammad united the Arabs and put an end to the long bloodshed that had claimed many lives. He also negotiated with other religious groups in Medina, the Jews and the Christians. He concluded a peace treaty with them. Unfortunately, the peace treaty did not last long. Medina became a battle zone between Muhammad and the Quraysh, his enemy from Mecca. That unhealthy situation lasted for a few years before Muhammad was able to end it by conquering

Mecca in 630 C. E. and giving amnesty to all his opponents to win their support to the cause of Islam. Due to his diplomacy and acute judgment, Muhammad was able to win their hearts and united them as a community of faith with a message of peace to deliver to the world. By the time he died in 632 C. E., the Arabs had surrendered to his leadership and accepted Islam as their religion. Henceforth, they carried the message to neighboring countries and eventually won them to Islam one-by-one through peaceful invitation and occasionally through the use of force, even though Muslims claim that there is no compulsion in Islam (*Qur'an* 2:256).

Muhammad's migration (*Hijrah*) to Medina in 622 C. E. marked a turning point in Islamic history. It was after this period that he was able to spread and establish Islam as a state's religion. In Medina, he united people, settled their disputes, built mosques, and organized his followers to become leaders of their community. He turned Medina into an Islamic state where politics and religion were not separated from one another. He laid down rules and regulations of governance; he set codes of conduct as he received them from God. Muhammad encountered enormous problems in Medina. But through perseverance, hope, good planning and the full support from God and unconditional commitment of his followers, he overcame them. Muslims in Medina recognized Muhammad as a Prophet, a person of high moral character and an exemplar of good conduct. He called all people to join him. For under Islam, God turns away nobody because all humans are equal before Him.. They admired him as a kind father, a loving husband, a loyal and compassionate friend, and a generous person to the poor and the needy. Muhammad died in Medina at age 63 after a short illness without leaving a male heir or property.

Muhammad's death was a shock to some of his followers, who thought that a prophet should never die. Of course, he never claimed any divinity for himself and his disciples never saw him as a divine person, an incarnated god or a Son of God. He was a human being. However, he brought the message of Islam. This message continues to grow all over the world until today. Muslims believe that Islam is for all human beings. It has no territorial boundaries even though it emerged from Arabia like Christianity emerged from Jerusalem. Muhammad, before he died, had created a society built on religion, love, helping

one another and equality. Arabia had never seen something like that before; racism and inequality were erased. Humans are seen as equal to one another and believers united together on the basis of belief in one God and not on ethnic, tribal or national affiliations.

The death of Muhammad did not put an end to Islam. Rather it was the beginning of Islamic expansion. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, succeeded him and strived vigorously to unite those Muslims who rejected Islam because of the death of the Prophet. He also laid down a strong foundational structure of governance and convinced his followers about the necessity of compiling the *Qur'an* into a book. His reign was full of accomplishments and solidified the Muslim state. He died within a short time, but he spent two and one-half years as caliph.

However, before his death, he strongly recommended to the electoral committee, which he appointed, to consider Umar bin al-Khattab as his successor because of the leadership qualities he observed in him. Umar was selected as the second caliph. He ruled with justice and equality and expanded Islam to Persia and Byzantine territories and won many of them to Islam. Muslim armies also conquered Jerusalem during his reign in 638 C. E. Umar himself went to Jerusalem to receive the key of the city. He encouraged both Christians and Jews to remain in Jerusalem and to practice their religions as they wished. Hence, Muslims, Christians and Jews enjoyed peaceful co-existence in Jerusalem for a long time until Christian crusaders put an end to that tranquility in 1099 C. E.

Umar was renowned as a just leader. He was labeled the second founder of Islam due to the strong structure and innovative ideas he introduced into Islam. He was not afraid of change. Nonetheless, a Persian slave assassinated him in 644 C. E. claiming that Umar had not attended to his needs. Before his death, he selected six companions as an electoral committee and advised them to choose one of them as his successor. Their selection was Uthman bin Affan, who became the third caliph in 644 C. E.

Uthman inherited a strong government with abundant wealth. Unfortunately, he began restructuring by demoting those leaders whom Umar had appointed and replacing them with his relatives. He was suspected of nepotism. Such change in governance led to

intense tension and ill feeling among the companions. Uthman was a softhearted leader who was generous but was said to be weak in making serious decisions. Eventually, rebels came from Syria and Egypt and assassinated him in Medina after a long siege. When the rebels came, Uthman did not want the people of Medina to defend him. He was left alone until he was killed.

Certainly, Uthman should be credited for unifying all Muslims to follow one *Qur'an*. It was he who finally made several copies of the holy *Qur'an* that he considered the most authentic and distributed it to all Muslim districts at that time. He ordered that his copy be recognized, followed and that other individual copies be discarded. Muslims complied; they destroyed their personal copies. By so doing, Muslims have today only one version of the *Qur'an*. Uthman reigned for twelve years longer than other caliphs. His death had a devastating impact upon succeeding generations of Muslims because the rebels who killed him escaped punishment by running away from Medina; they were neither caught nor punished. Sadly, Uthman was secretly buried to arrest the turmoil in Medina. After his death, the Muslim community selected Ali bin Abi Talib as the next caliph.

Ali was a son-in-law and a cousin of Prophet Muhammad. His leadership came at a time of great turmoil and unrest in that the community wanted him to bring the killers of Uthman to justice. But Ali was unable to do so because he could not find them. Henceforth, most of the leaders whom Uthman had appointed as governors in different districts and cities insisted that they would not surrender to Ali's leadership until he punished those rebels. It was a "Catch 22." How could he punish those whom he could not find?

Unfortunately, a few of the leading companions of the Prophet did not support the election of Ali as caliph, including Aishat, the prophet's youngest wife. This also led to friction in the Muslim community. From a practical standpoint, Ali did not enjoy his reign; it was fraught with many problems. Despite his acumen, bravery, eloquence and foresight, many did not yield to his leadership. As it is said in an African proverb, "*Nothing can a great singer do if his audience / people are not ready to dance.*" Thus he spent most of his time defending himself and his policies. Many even challenged him on the battlefield. Although he won many battles, he was overwhelmed by his problems. He spent only

a few years as caliph before Abu Lu'lu' killed him in 661 C. E. Before his assassination, he had moved the capital of the Islamic state from Medina to Iraq on the invitation of his ardent followers, who eventually deserted him; they were known as *Khawarij* (the dissenters).

Later, Mu'awiyah bin Abu Sufyan, a rival to Ali and the governor of Damascus, became the leader of the Muslims after the killing of Ali. Mu'awiyah turned the Muslim state into an empire and crushed all those who opposed him and were not ready to compromise with him. He was one of the most able administrators and a generous leader. He tried always to win his opponents to his side through his generosity. When he was about to die, he appointed his son Yazid to be his successor. From that time on, leadership of the Islamic state became a monarchy, whereby king after king ruled the Muslim world until today. The Umayyad dynasty, which was established by Mu'awiyah, ruled for 100 years before they were overthrown by the Abbasid dynasty. They were not better off in governance than their predecessors because they adopted the monarchy system.

Both the Umayyad and Abbasid empires advanced Islamic knowledge. They established educational institutions, documented Islamic sciences, encouraged translation of classic works from other languages and cultures into Arabic language. The Abbasid leaders were patrons of Islamic research and science. They spread the Islamic civilization to many parts of the world and Arabized the languages of the conquered territories with ease. Islam spread to all parts of the world through devout traders, pious Muslim scholars and Sufi pioneers, who embodied Islam in their daily lives. They invited others to Islam without the use of force but through peaceful interaction, amicable communication, and respectful dialogue and discussion. Through these traders and Sufi leaders, the people of Africa, Asia, China, and part of Europe embraced Islam en-mass. Islam remains in those territories until today. Despite all the negative things attributed to both the Umayyad and Abbasid empires, both dynasties contributed tremendously to Islamic civilization, culture, sciences, and technology in their time. Their leaders became patrons and philanthropists for the advancement of knowledge, freedom of expression, debate, and the exchange of ideas among eminent scholars throughout their empires.

In addition, even though both empires embarked on huge expansions of their territories, history has shown that the primary objective of expansion was to amass wealth and not to Islamize the conquered people. Hence, on several occasions, leaders of the conquered territories were retained in their political positions as long as they paid their taxes to the Muslim overseers. Also, Muslims did not force their culture on the conquered people as evidenced in North and West Africa, India and Persia. These peoples retained their cultures, languages and customs even though Islam has had a great influence on them for many centuries.

Islam is a religion of faith and action. It does not believe in the theory of justification by faith as espoused by Christian theologians. Anyone who embraces Islam must believe in the six articles of faith, which are the basic doctrines of Islam. Through them, Muslims share common beliefs with both Judaism and Christianity such as the belief in one God, in resurrection, in judgment and the accountability of one's actions, and in receiving reward or punishment for one's deeds. Muslims must accompany their beliefs with actions, which are known as the five pillars. These are the core requirements of Islam and failure to perform them will render one's faith incomplete and void. Fulfilling them brings a Muslim into a relationship with God, the Almighty.

In order for Muslims to fulfill all the requirements of the Islamic religion, they must know what God wants them to do and not do. Hence, they have to turn to the sources of the Islamic religion, which are the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* or *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that God revealed the *Qur'an* to Muhammad as a book of guidance during a period of twenty-three years at Mecca and Medina in the Arabic language. When Muhammad received it, he taught it to his disciples orally. It was after his death that the *Qur'an* was compiled, copied, and distributed to Muslims by Caliph Uthman bin Affan. Muslims regard the *Qur'an* as the words of God and a book of guidance in all aspects of life. It discusses the unity of God, life after death, and the Day of Judgment. It also teaches morals, encourages good deeds and forbids evil actions. It narrates the history of past generations and tells the stories of important figures and prophets of the past. It explains the basic laws that Muslims must follow. The *Qur'an* guides Muslims on how to relate to others and live with them harmoniously.

The *Hadith*, on the other hand, spells out how Muhammad interpreted the *Qur'an* and applied it. What Muhammad said, did and approved are the subject matter of the *Hadith*. When the *Qur'an* is silent on an issue, the Prophet supplies the needed information. On that basis, the *Hadith* complements the *Qur'an*. Muhammad becomes and remains the role model for Muslims in all aspects of life, for they believe that he is the embodiment of the message of the *Qur'an*. He received it, internalized it, interpreted it, applied it and lived it. God told Muslims in the *Qur'an* that they must obey Muhammad. Therefore, there is no proper understanding of *Qur'an* without taking into consideration how Muhammad understood and applied it. Both the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* work together as a unique message through which Muslims are informed about their duties and responsibilities toward God and their fellow human beings.

The real compilation of the *Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad took place nearly a century after his death. When he was alive, he did not want Muslims to mix his own sayings and opinions with the revelation he received from God so as not to cause any confusion between the word of God and his pronouncements. Hence, while the entire *Qur'an* is regarded as very authentic and untampered with, there remains controversy about the authenticity of the *Hadith*. Fortunately, Muslim scholars developed the science of *Hadith* very early in Islam. With this science, they subjected the *Hadith* literature to scrutiny and vigorous evaluation to determine its authenticity. They found many to be authentic while a few were weak.

The most authentic books on *Hadith* are the compilations of Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim. Their compilations are known as *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. Yet, *Hadith* scholars do suggest that there are some *Hadith* in both collections whose authenticity is questionable. Muslim scholars on the science of *Hadith* have debated this issue thoroughly in their classic books on *Hadith*. What many modern Islamist scholars in the West focus on the authenticity of the *Hadith* or the lack of it, this effort is a repetitious and at times a deliberate distortion of what has been said before by Muslim scholars. The science of *Hadith* criticism (*ilm al-jarh wa Ta'dil*), which is similar to what the West calls Biblical studies, was established in the 9th century (the 3rd

century of Islam) and used by scholars in evaluating the authenticity of the *Hadith*.

Beyond the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, there are other sources of Islam which are recognized as secondary sources. Muslim scholars turn to these sources where there are gray areas in the law, where the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* are silent about an issue, be it old or new. The secondary sources include the consensus of Muslim scholars (*Ijma'*) and analogy (*Qiyas*), which is to apply an old law to a new case due to the similarity between the two. *Ijma'* and *Qiyas* are of paramount importance to Muslims as they encounter new issues or face new problems that arise in their daily lives. Since Islam is believed to be a universal religion and the *Qur'an* is the last message to humanity, Muslim scholars opine that they must find solutions to new problems. Through these sources, they are able to address novel issues that arise everyday and about which the primary sources are silent.

Further, the fulfillment of all the beliefs and rituals of Islam needs a body of government to carry them out. Hence, a need for a law to govern the affairs of Muslims since there is no separation between religion and state in Islam. Unfortunately, people become alarmed and raise red flags whenever the discussion of Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) arises. The picture that always comes to their minds is capital punishment, the flogging of a fornicator, and the cutting off the hand of a thief. These are perceived as archaic laws of the past which should be totally discarded in the modern progressive era. This fear of Islamic law emerges due to the lack of true understanding of Islamic laws and the negative propaganda of the Western media against Islam, which is portrayed as a threat to Western secularization.

Nonetheless, Muslims believe that Islamic law is the rule that governs the daily activities of Muslims. There are two different types of law in Islam: religious laws and transactional laws. Religious laws cover those aspects of the human being in his relationship with God. Transactional laws deal with his relationship with his fellow human beings and other creatures. Islamic law was revealed to Muhammad and covers many aspects of Muslim daily life. Muslim scholars are in charge of interpreting these laws and can suggest amicable solutions to new issues or cases when the texts, the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* leave gray

areas unaddressed. Muslim scholars who deal with the understanding, interpretation and application of Islamic laws are called *fuqaha*.

There are four major schools of law in Islam. They are: the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools. All acknowledge the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as the primary sources from which Islamic laws are derived. Consensus (*Ijma'*), analogy (*Qiyas*), and common good (*Istislah*) are considered the secondary sources of Islamic law. That is, these sources are referred to when there is no solution found in the *Qur'an* or the *Hadith*. Furthermore, Islamic law continues to address Muslims' legal needs through the process of free thinking (*Ijtihad*) and by the decision reached through the consensus of Muslim scholars (*Ijma'*), which is a decision-making process to better understand, interpret and apply the *Qur'an* or the *Hadith*.

The main objectives of Islamic law are the preservation or protection of religion, wealth, family, life, human honor and intellect. Anything that can help preserve these is encouraged, and anything that causes harm to them is totally condemned. Muslims believe that the protection of the above will bring happiness to believers, which will enable them to live harmoniously with one another. On the other hand, Muslims consider the application of Islamic laws (*Shari'ah*) an act of worship because the law itself is a divine law, revealed by God, who knows what is best for believers. These laws cover both personal and public aspects of life.

Finally, Islamic law aims at fairness, justice and peace making among people. Muslims believe that if they apply the laws of God as He commanded them to do, they will attain peace. They consider the enforcement of Western or foreign laws on them an infringement of their rights to choose their laws and therefore an act of aggression. They strongly believe that Western laws do not serve their interests and see no reason why they should abide by them because they are secular laws, which serve the interests of their enactors.

After believing in God and his Prophet, and after observing the five pillars of Islam and recognizing the sources of Islamic religion, a Muslim has to strive to earn more reward from God. Islam has come to bring humans back to God, link them with the sources of love, peace, abundance and certitude. When a Muslim believes, practices the five daily prayers, and listens to God and to the Prophet through the *Qur'an*

and *Sunnah*, the next step for him is to strengthen his relationship with God through spiritual development (Sufism). Sufism is the mystical path which incites the feeling of being in the presence of God. It is an act of getting close to God and a total detachment from the material world. Those who tread this path are known as Sufis, the lovers of God. Their main goals are the purification of souls, loving all creatures, helping others and learning how to behave in the presence of Almighty God at all times. Sufism is as old as Islam itself. Its pioneers relate their roots to Prophet Muhammad. Sufism had no structure until the 2nd century of Islam. It developed when some Muslim leaders paid less attention to the spiritual development of believers. It began when some Muslims tried to amass as much wealth as they could and gave priority to the lower self. It arose in response to the then Muslim focus on political affairs and the expansion of Islamic territories without actually converting the conquered people to Islam.

Sufism permeates through all the various schools of Islamic thought, or Islamic laws or sects. It knows no boundary. One can be a Shi'i and a Sufi, or a Sunni and a Sufi at the same time. Sufis are renowned for being lovers of God and His creatures. They pay more attention to the spirit of Islam on daily basis than to the application of the laws. They emphasize the unity of God and the brotherhood of all human beings. They are very inclusive and open-minded in their approaches. They relate to all people regardless of their religious affiliations and perceive all people as human beings and one race rather than as Muslims, Christians, Jews, or atheists. There are many Sufi orders. Although they share a common trend and essence in their attempts to get close to God, they maintain different traditions and practices to attain those goals in different locales. They are not in opposition to one another. Their love and compassion for everyone has assisted them in spreading Islam into all corners of the world. Sufis are of different categories of Muslims; real Sufis are the protectors of Islam. Those who claim to be Sufis but hardly practice Islam are the ones who pay less attention to Islamic ethics. They employ their order or power to accumulate wealth or win favor from the government. These are the groups that many Muslim orthodox scholars oppose because they misrepresent Islam. Practical Sufis are educated and open-minded. They love and exhibit

extreme care for others. This attitude enables them to win the hearts of their followers.

Further, women's issues will continue to be at the core of Islamic discourse in the West for some years to come. As long as Muslim women put on their *hijab* (head cover) the bitter debate will continue and hence Muslims will receive condemnation from Western scholars and feminists who suspect Islam of oppressing women and forcing them to cover their heads. Undoubtedly, many Muslim women choose to cover their heads and dress modestly in compliance with the dictates of their religion. They do not perceive wearing a headscarf an act of oppression or disrespect to them personally. Rather, they consider it a protective measure against men's exploitation of women's bodies and honor. More and more women express their comfort with wearing the headscarf nowadays. They consider it a badge of honor and a symbol of their religious identity, of which they are proud. Some actually see it as a tool of liberation from the vain and selfish desire to show off one's beauty or to compete with women around them. When a Muslim woman puts on her *hijab*, she does not have to live up to societal expectations of what is desirable. She does not have to use her beauty to win recognition or acceptance from those around her. She does not have to use her beauty to obtain a job but uses her talent and expertise. Wearing her *hijab* allows her to preserve societal modesty and helps keep her from media exploitation of her beauty and sex.

Islam as a religion never puts women down; however, many Muslim cultures from East and West do relegate them to the lowest status. Therefore, Muslim women would be better off complying with the injunctions of the *Qur'an*, which guarantees them their rights in every aspect of life. Muslim men and women are equal before God and both receive rewards on the merit of their righteous deeds and responsibilities rather than on the basis of their gender. On those rare occasions where it appears that Muslim men are more privileged than their female counterparts, as in the inheritance laws, a thorough understanding of such cases and their backgrounds will reveal that the responsibilities, particularly financial, of men are much greater and, therefore, that justice demands they be treated fairly by taking this into account. In other areas such as marriage, divorce, or custody, the consent of the Muslim women is of paramount importance. Their

approval must be sought and recognized. The failure of men, whether they are parents, brothers, or custodians, to give a woman her voice in her marriage gives that woman the right to accept or not accept what is chosen for her and then the right to take her case to an Islamic court for adjudication.

With regard to financial issues, Muslim women are free to work, earn and spend their money as they want. Islam does not require them to even spend on their spouses. Whatever they earn or inherit belongs to them and they have the absolute right to dispose of their property as they wish without getting any approval from anyone. In Islam, God has guaranteed women these rights from the very advent of Islam and lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. The deplorable conditions of Muslim women today result from the syncretism of pristine Islam with the local cultures in which many Muslims live, which in many cases accords little respect to women and wrongly limits them to the home only for cooking and nursing.

When it comes to human social life, there is no other religion that encourages interaction among its adherents more than Islam. Devout Muslims gather together at least five times daily at the mosque for prayer. The mosque in Islam remains the center of all activities and a place of worship. There they pray together, shoulder-to-shoulder, learn, organize and discuss any issues that relate to Islam, Muslims, and the community. While the inside of the mosque can be a prayer place, a court of law, or a school, the areas outside can be used as a market place and a play ground after the prayer. The role that the mosque plays in Islam cannot be underemphasized. Furthermore, Friday remains a public weekly holiday for many Muslims. However, a Muslim is free to go back to work after Friday prayer. Islam requires all adult male Muslims to attend Friday congregational prayer where they meet, greet one another, and share their joys and adversities.

There are other social gatherings in Islam. These include the *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha* festivals. *Eid al-Fitr* marks the celebration at the end of fasting in the month of Ramadan. Muslims celebrate the "fast-breaking." It is always a joyful occasion for all Muslims in that they resume their normal daily routines and thank God for the completion of a whole month of fasting. *Eid al-Adha* marks the end of the Islamic annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca. It occurs on the 10th of *Zhul-Hijjah*,

the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims celebrate it by sacrificing an animal to God in remembrance of the practice of Prophet Abraham and his son, Ishmael. The sacrifice is a token of appreciation to God for His blessings and favor upon human beings. Each *Eid* lasts three days during which Muslims enjoy themselves by attending *Eid* prayers, celebrations, visiting one another and exchanging gifts. They also celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (*Mawlid*), naming and marriage ceremonies.

Muslims also socialize through their educational institutions, especially the *madrasat* (religious schools) and colleges, which in Islam emerged from the mosque. At *madrasat*, pupils learn about the basic tenets of Islam, the *Qur'an* and its meanings. They also receive instruction on *Hadith* (the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad), and on Islamic ethics. The relationship between students and their teachers is one of mutual respect. Teachers are not perceived as salaried tutors whose jobs end in the classroom, but as spiritual guides. Oftentimes, teachers of the *Qur'an* actually receive no salary but gifts from students' parents, if they have anything to give. Students and teachers are regarded as one family; thus, their relationship is typically very cordial.

While Muslims share happiness with other Muslims during the occasions of marriage, naming ceremonies, prayers and festivals, they also join others in sorrow, especially, to be there for the unfortunate and bereaved who have suffered calamity or the loss of loved ones. The Muslim community cares for them and renders to them whatever financial or spiritual support they need. Muslims are socially and communally oriented. They pay little attention to notions of individuality. When a personal interest conflicts with the community's interest, preference is given to the greater societal interest. However, the responsibility of each member of a Muslim community is taught to them and each member is required to comply. Every Muslim is responsible for his or her deeds and is accountable for them.

Islam has also set moral values for its members. It teaches them what is right and what is wrong and how they have to behave with one another in their daily lives. In the areas where there exists no direct guideline, Muslims are free to use their common sense. However, they have certain responsibilities to discharge toward themselves and their

community, as stated by Prophet Muhammad in one of the *Hadith*. He says:

Every one of you is a guardian (shepherd) and is responsible for his charges. The ruler is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man (father or husband) is a guardian in his family and is responsible for his charges. A woman is a guardian of her husband's home or house and is responsible for her charges. A servant (maid) is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for his charges. A man (son) is a guardian of his father's property and is responsible for his charges. Thus every one of you is a guardian and everyone is responsible for his charges. (Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari)

In Islam only God determines what is good or bad for believers. Whatever He declares to be good must be good because it must be beneficial for believers. Whatever He declares to be bad must be bad because of the harmfulness it entails. Occasionally, the good or the harm may not be obvious to the believers due to their limited knowledge, such as in the case of gambling. Moral values are essential in Islam and since Islam separates not between the state and the church, whatever action a Muslim embarks upon must be in accord with the teachings of Islam. Certainly, every Muslim will account for his deeds on the Day of Judgment. Therefore, he is expected to obey God at all times. His goal in life should be the winning of God's pleasure and blessings through one's total submission to Him.

There are four types of duties in Islam: duty to God, duty to oneself, duty to other human beings, and duty to other creatures. By "duty" we mean what an individual owes to others. What others owe us are in turn our rights. In addition to these major duties and obligations, Islam teaches ethics of eating, drinking, dressing, cleansing, visiting, playing, entertainment, ethics of receiving guests, and of doing business. In all these areas, God and His prophet Muhammad explicate to believers what they should and should not do, and how they should behave. When there is no injunction on a particular issue, or the *Qur'an* or

Hadith is silent about it, Muslims are at liberty to design what they think is right by taking into consideration the spirit of Islam.

In general, the primary aim of Islamic values is to mold Muslim's character and behavior to the extent that he or she can be a trusted citizen who knows and follows what is right and abstains from wrong deeds without any supervision. His conscience will be his guide. When he reaches this level of awareness of God, he becomes a practical and responsible person who contributes to the development of his community and is a protector of its values. He renders to others what he owes them willingly; yet he does not demand his rights by force because he knows that what escapes him is what God has decreed will escape him. He is fully aware that whatever good God has decreed to come his way will definitely reach him because nobody else can prevent it. Nevertheless, practical Muslims are expected to be moderate in all their affairs and keep balance in all their undertakings; this means no pacifism and no extremism. Islam discourages pessimism and shuns extremism because no good accrues from either.

Islam from its inception recognizes all revealed religions, Christianity and Judaism. Many verses in the *Qur'an* deal with relationship between Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The *Qur'an* even lays down rules on how they should treat one another during the peace period and during the time of war. These three religions have lived together for centuries as neighbors and friends in many places, but have occasionally been enemies too, as pointed by Bernard Lewis in his work *Islam and the West*. The Jews who lived under Muslim rules received kind treatment from Muslims in Turkey, Spain and Baghdad. When the Jews established their own state in 1948, they did not reciprocate the kind treatment they received from Muslims throughout their history; rather, they treated and continue to treat Muslims in Palestine badly and have sent many of them into refugee camps as if the Palestinian Arabs were the ones who persecuted them in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. The relationship between Muslims and Jews remains strained since 1948.

On the other hand, Islam does not recognize polytheistic traditions as valid religions. Muslims always perceive adherents of polytheistic religions as subjects for conversion and unkind treatment. Hence there have been several hostile encounters between them starting from the beginning of Islam. While Muslims retain cordial relationships with

Buddhists in many countries, their treatment of Bahais and Hindus has sometimes been hostile. In the wake of September 11, many religious groups recognized the need for a better understanding of Islam and Muslims to ensure peaceful relationships among them. Each group has initiated and designed outreach programs whereby members of different traditions meet, share ideas, and discuss issues of common concern through genuine dialogue with the purpose of developing better and mutual understanding of other's religious traditions. The purpose of dialogue is not to convert others to one's religion but to learn more about one another. This author believes that through dialogue and learning about ourselves (as humans) we'll have a better understanding and recognition that we are good neighbors who inhabit this small universe, searching for God and seeking His blessings. Our differences are not as great as we portray them to ourselves; we have so much more in common than we think.

Many Americans were not aware of the existence of Islam and Muslims in America until the Iranians took some Americans as hostages in 1979 in Iran. However, Islam has been in America since the arrival of the African slaves into the New World. Nearly 10-15% of the slaves imported to the U.S. were Muslim. Some of them were even scholars of Islam. As slaves, their holders prevented them from practicing their beliefs. Only a few who were very strong, brave and committed to practicing Islam at any cost. The first generation of Muslims was unable to transmit Islam adequately to the next generation as they wanted, but still Islam did not die away. By the end of the 19th century, Islam surfaced again in different forms and from different corners of the U.S. In the 1920s, the Ahmadiyyah movement arrived in America and began to propagate Islam, especially to Blacks. A number of African American Muslims also established Islamic movements in their communities. Among them was Noble Drew Ali, who founded the Moorish Temple in Detroit and worked hard for the propagation of Islam until the end of 1930.

In 1931, a white Muslim of controversial identity named Wallace Fard emerged in Detroit, Michigan. He convinced Blacks of his call to Islam to give them a new identity. He founded the Lost Found Nation of Islam in the Wilderness. Many African Americans joined him because of his rhetoric and his appeal to their social and economic

needs. Fard worked hard among the Blacks until he mysteriously disappeared in 1934 and no one knew about his whereabouts until he died supposedly in 1990s. However, before his disappearance, he had appointed one of his able followers to succeed him. That was Honorable Elijah Muhammad, the prophet of Islam in America, as believed by his disciples. Elijah Muhammad took over the Nation of Islam (NOI), restructured it and made it a racist group and one of the most influential African American religious movements. He won many converts and was able to get them out of the ghettos. They became somebody, human beings with their own dignity; they were proud of themselves. Elijah mixed Islam with racism and encouraged his followers to work hard, respect their families, stand on their feet and build their own economies without any reliance upon White people, whom he labeled as devils. He got his message across by all possible means, even by violence at times. Before he died in 1975, he had trained many followers, established some educational institutions for Blacks and built a financial empire for them through the establishment of small businesses and banks.

Among his followers were: Malcolm X, the Umar of Islam in America, Minister Louis Farrakhan, the prophet of rage, Muhammad Ali, the world heavy weight champion in boxing, and Elijah's son, Imam Warithu Deen Mohammed, until his recent death the head of orthodox Islam in America. Imam Mohammed is the most articulate of all; he is the prophet of non-violence and the champion of moderation and tolerance among all the Muslim groups in America. The role Elijah Muhammad and his followers played in spreading Islam in America can never be overlooked or forgotten. Members of the NOI were the ones who brought Islam to the American public and sacrificed their lives and money for the cause of Islam and for the advancement of all African Americans in the U.S.

The NOI's approach to Islam is very inclusive. There are many other Islamic or Muslim movements in the U.S. today. Each group or movement works for Islam in one form or another. Collectively, the groups have made a great impact on the growth of Islam in America. At present, it seems that Islam is the second largest religion in the country. Muslims believe that Islam is here to stay despite all the negative images of Islam in the American media, especially after

the tragic event of September 11th. Muslims in America are growing and developing. They have become active participants in American politics; they engage in their local civic, cultural, political and business activities. Their intellectual, educational, scientific and technological contributions to the advancement of America have been immense, especially when one considers the millions of immigrant Muslims with the best qualifications in knowledge and sciences. While it cannot be denied that a tiny minority of Muslims in the U.S. is troublesome in the sense that they can be difficult to deal with (though they are not terrorists), the majority of Muslims are law-abiding citizens who work hard, pay their taxes and other dues and contribute tremendously to the progress and advancement of America. Above all, they are proud of being Muslim Americans.

Finally, any discussion of Islam without a reference to *Jihad* would be incomplete. The interpretation of *Jihad* nowadays as the killing of innocent people and non-believers wherever they are is a gross distortion of the truth. *Jihad* simply means struggling and striving in the cause of God and for the betterment of a community. Therefore, when a Muslim improves his life, attends to the needs of his family, protects his country and combats evils, he is making *Jihad*. Since the advent of Islam in Mecca, Muslims had and continue to engage in various *Jihad*. There is a *Jihad* against oneself to put things aright; there is a *Jihad* of bearing arms in defense of one's country, one's property and honor. Regardless of whatever *Jihad* a Muslim engages in, Islam has laid down rules and regulations on what constitutes a proper *Jihad* and how it should be carried out. Failure to adhere to those rules amounts to disregard of Islam. The attacks a small minority of Muslim fanatics inflict upon innocent people are totally wrong and against Islam. Their perpetrators should be brought to justice. Islam prohibits killing and causing harm to others. If a Muslim has a grievance against another, he should bring it to the court of law and a legal authority. No Muslim should take the application of the law into his own hands. Therefore, Islam has nothing to do with the fanatic Muslims who carry out violent acts in the name of God.

However, our leaders should be bold enough to ask why fanatics attack us. The U.S. government claims that the attackers hate Americans because of our democracy and our advancement. This response is overly

simplistic and irrational because Muslims do not hate democracy, or hate Americans. There are about 7-8 million Muslims living among us in America. They are law-abiding people, well-educated and contribute to the advancement of America. Of course, many Muslims here and abroad are totally frustrated with the double-standard policies of the U.S. government toward Muslims all over the world until the year 2000. They abhor relentless U.S. efforts to support the "rag and undemocratic states" in Muslim countries and weaken other states under the pretext of keeping a balance of power in the Middle East. The U.S. and the UN continue to pass resolutions against many Muslim countries all the time. When these sanctions are not implemented, the U.S. government wants to implement them with the use of force. Whereas, several and similar sanctions have been passed against other states or governments. When these states fail to comply with UN resolutions, the U.S. government is silent and never raises any question against such states. In those cases there is no attempt by the U.S. to enforce the sanctions, which are many. It is this double-standard approach that irritates some Muslims all over the world. And as long as the problem of Palestinians and Israel is not resolved amicably, there will be no peace in the Middle East and without peace in the Middle East, there will be no peace in the world because of the Middle East's strategic position and its supply of oil.

The author is of the opinion that restoring peace to the Middle East and to many other parts of the world needs fair treatment, balanced policies without bias, and respect for other countries. It is undemocratic to impose our ideologies upon others when those ideologies serve no good purpose for them. War nowadays cannot bring peace; likewise, violence never leads to peace. Peace can only come through mutual understanding among many nations, respect for other cultures and for each other, and accommodation of our differences. That the U.S. is a superpower today should be used to bring people together, strengthen our coalition and not be used to dominate any country that disagrees with us. That we are leaders today does not give us the right to oppress others or force them to surrender to our ideas and ideals if they do not choose to do so. They should be free to choose democracy as their way of life. When democracy is forced on them, then it is not true democracy but dictatorship.

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Islam is the religion of total submission to God. It is the belief of more than one-fifth of all human beings and is the second largest religion in the world. Despite its large number, little was known about it in America until after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Unfortunately, the American media has portrayed Islam negatively since September 11th and distorted its true meaning. Many people are beginning to ask questions about Islam. This book provides honest and forthright answers to their questions.

An Insider's Guide to Islam is a practical guide that explains Islam as understood and practiced by Muslims of diverse backgrounds. For Muslims, Islam is a way of life and a religion of peace that brings tranquility and harmony to their lives. Islam is a rich culture and a unique tradition which must be understood on its own merits.

The author brings insight into what Islam means, how it is practiced and its relationship with other religions. He also analyzes the concept of Jihad, the role of women in Islam and the values that Islam cherishes. The unique development of Islam in America and the roles that Muslims play in the United States are also thoughtfully considered in this book.

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